

GALLERY
OF
PORTRAITS
OF THE
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY,
SUPPOSED TO BE WRITTEN BY
COUNT DE MIRABEAU.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

DUBLIN:

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P R E F A C E,

BY THE

T R A N S L A T O R.

THE man, who thinks as well as reads, has always a certain degree of pleasure in informing himself of the chronology and other minute circumstances of the volumes, upon which he condescends to bestow a perusal. For the sake of such persons we think proper to mention, that the first part of the Gallery of Portraits appears to have been chiefly written previous to the destruction of the Bastile 14 July, though there are some passages seemingly of a more recent date. The second volume has allusions to events as recent as the presidency of Mr. Mounier, that is, to a period beginning with 28 September, and ending 8 October.

There is a part of the present volume, that will probably appear to the reader, as it has done to us, considerably extraordinary; we mean the character, entitled *Cneis*, which professes to be the portrait of the author of the present work. The work has been generally ascribed in France to the count de Mirabeau, and the

the internal evidence of the fact, particularly in the former volume, appears to be by no means equivocal. But the character of Cneis neither suits the opinion the world entertains of Mirabeau, nor the opinion that Mirabeau may be supposed to entertain of himself. There occur to us only two solutions of this difficulty; either Cneis is, which we think improbable, the literary coadjutor of this celebrated author, or the portrait must be regarded as a piece of *mauvaise plaisanterie*, in which the author means to be very witty, but miscarries, as it frequently happens, in the execution.

In the advertisement of the editor, prefixed to the French original, there is a complaint of a performance that has been obtruded upon the public, consisting of fifty pages, and entitled Supplement to the Gallery of the National Assembly. It is added, that "the two authors
" have neither the same principles, the same
" style, the same mode of judging, the same
" spirit, nor the same philosophy." The editor goes on to apologise for "the insertion of
" the portraits of some persons, who are not deputies to the states-general;" adding, that
" they are either members of the municipal assemblies, or have considerable influence upon
" the public in general, or have so greatly
" contributed to produce the present events,
" that the omission of them would have rendered the Gallery maimed and imperfect."

INTRODUCTION.

THE first volume of this Gallery excited some observation. It was said to be of too bold a complexion. This criticism led me to reflect upon the liberty of the press. It is of the essence of liberty to give a free course to all sorts of ideas. The zealot of aristocracy should inculcate the spirit of despotism, the friend of the people should extol the blessings of freedom, every one should be at liberty to publish whatever he thinks useful, unchecked by the slightest apprehension of prosecution and punishment. If all this be not law, truth will remain unknown; we shall be deluged with hypocritical writings, and the press will serve only to give a temporary credit to the poor and fleeting system of the day.

Nothing but truth remains with us. All the rest amuses, entertains, and is forgotten. What is it, that interests us chiefly in the present moment? To obtain a wise legislation. To succeed in this, we must distinguish between the different pretenders; and to distinguish between them, their Portraits ought to be given us by a man, who has studied them again and again.

We have at the present moment twelve hundred depositaries of the national will; and out of these not more than one hundred have become

come the topics of general discussion. From this hundred we must strike off as many as have no other recommendation, than their lungs, their vehemence, and their ready command of expression. After this first essay, we must farther subtract those, whose intention is to be admired, to get into office, or to become the demagogues of either of the three parties. What remains will be indeed a small number, and among these we shall trace men of timid dispositions, who, not being able to calculate what courage can perform, chuse rather to expect the public welfare from the concurrence of circumstances; we shall discover the rash and the headlong, eager to destroy, because they conceive, that whatever is substituted will be better than what exists; we shall discover the unstable and fluctuating, who grow feebler and feebler as difficulties increase; we shall find the opinionated, who ever regard with complacence their own conceptions, and the credulous, who consider practice as no more difficult than theory.

When all these shades shall be sufficiently marked, when these different characters are explained to the public, and the talents and passions of men are rendered notorious, the confidence of the nation will no longer be given in vain.

The existing assembly has performed wonders, if we consider, that the French were unexperienced in this kind of undertaking; that, the devoted victims of ministerial plans, they knew no better resource, than to subscribe the loans and pay the taxes, and sing away sorrow. Astonishment has been expressed, that in the warmth
of

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of discussion, the sittings have become irregular and tumultuous; the true astonishment, if we considered our national vivacity and our want of instruction, would be, to have found so great a degree of harmony. But these inconveniencies will incessantly diminish, when the electors shall be better acquainted with their office and with the merits of the candidates.

To these remarks I perceive it will be objected, that my principles are right, but that I have not adhered to the true spirit of the conclusion. "Portraits may be of use, but the portraits must have more resemblance, than those of your Gallery."

I answer in the first place, that the majority of my pictures are drawn after nature, and that the criticisms that point out where the likeness is deficient, themselves supply what my performance wants. While they prove, that I have described a man with too much coldness or too much exaggeration, they inform the public what should be added and what should be subtracted. The remarks of the author, and the remarks he extorts from others, will complete the instruction of him who examines the portrait.

"But, is it allowable to detract from or destroy the reputations of men?" What call you allowable? It is a matter of indispensable obligation. Shall a man usurp a certain degree of estimation, and that estimation recommend him to my suffrage, shall he thus obtain the right of making the laws by which I am to be governed, and shall not I employ every possible circumspection, that I may know the character of him, whom I chuse for my sovereign and the arbiter

arbiter of my existence? "But," it will be added, "every member of the national assembly has a whole bailliage that pledge themselves for his integrity. What then is any single individual in comparison of a bailliage?" I answer first, that there are individuals who see farther into a character than ten bailliaiges. I add next, that the objection is built entirely upon a sophism. A hundred common understandings acquire no additional force by their being united. They have a certain degree of penetration, and beyond that they never go. A hundred men together, combating one man who is greatly their superior, are no stronger, than each of them separately would be found in the same contest. The agreeing opinions of a hundred individuals are of no weight, in comparison of one opinion, that is vigorous and enlightened. I will add farther, that the electing bailliage knows nothing of the candidate, but by his assumed character that wears the mask of beneficence, or by his rhetoric that employs the language of patriotism; while the philosophical observer notices, examines, collects, compares and knows to the bottom the man, that is about to sport his popularity or buy his election. I have known a man take post horses in the midst of a *fête de la rosière*,* to run away with the daughter of a notary, while his tenants were employed in the hall of the mansion house in chanting aloud the beneficence of the squire. Lastly, I must be permitted to observe, that the

* A kind of rustic entertainment, where rose-buds and baubles are given to reward the virtuous actions of the vicinage.

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word *probité* implies nothing more in the present day, than the discretion, that hinders us from committing those notorious follies, that would deprive us of the power of committing others, by which we may be more considerable gainers.

A friend, who is in my secret, asked me, if, in this business of portrait painting, I did not intend to draw the ladies? Alas, to give a just idea of a living image of the graces, would require the pencil of Albano himself! I would nevertheless hazard a third volume upon this subject, if I did not suspect myself of a secret partiality for that delightful and all-commanding sex, that has indeed many faults, but that has a still greater number of those features, which we might censure without being guilty of calumny, but which it would be still easier to praise without the imputation of flattery.

The ladies do not indeed sit in the states general; but they do not the less wield the sceptre of opinion. There are few men, whose evening is not spent in unbosoming their doubts in the lap of friendship, in listening to the various reports that their chosen companions have collected in the course of the day, in reasoning with them upon the justice of their opinions, and in seeking to derive from their penetration, an advice to direct, or a judgment to confirm them.

When the sex has outlived the short period, that is filled by the ambition of conquests and the tumult of the passions, they return, as it were, to their true home, and the catalogue of their adorers and their deceivers furnishes them with an inexhaustible source of reflections. Re-
flection

lection is their guide to the solitariness of retreat, or rather to a retreat, that opens its doors to a select number of men, best suited to their temper and their taste. This is the epoch of real conquests, of durable friendships, of unmingled pleasures; and it is from this class of women, that I shall select my models, if I can still find a sufficient reserve of colours in my exhausted paller.

Certain newspapers, the Patriot in particular, the editor of which is not more to seek in the characters of men than in the merit of literary compositions, informs the world, that our portraits are caricaturas. Nothing is so easy as to employ a harsh word or a foolish one. This Patriot, distinguished for impartiality, but that flatters with vast assiduity those that are likely to become powerful, this paper, so public spirited, so original, that never retails at second-hand the thoughts of another, concludes, that contempt is the only punishment that should be awarded to bad writers and their works.

He talks much at his ease. He seems to be totally ignorant, that contempt is not a sentiment that we distribute where we please. I defy a man to despise a book of moderate principles, and the substance of which is true, even though he should discover that it contained errors. We point out those errors without despising the man that has committed them. I go farther. I say that the world does not even despise a farrago of other men's thoughts, that has neither taste, nor utility, nor method. They do not despise absurd political disquisitions, that contain nothing more than an ill digested repetition of certain maxims that have been

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been imported from a different climate; they do not despise criticisms, that are cowardly and unjust, or at least that proceed upon the most palpable mistakes. And why is all this moderation? Because in such writings we see exhibited a patriotical design, and a volubility of expression, the creature of a good memory and a pen long exercised in the author's trade. Can they then despise works, the fruit of meditation; works, from which a whole nation may draw an inestimable advantage, that of ascertaining the persons to whom she should confide her interests?

How many persons place their courage and their boast in vague declamations in favour of liberty? This is the age, or rather this is the moment of declamation. These fine prosopopeias, these pathetic apostrophes, are lost in the crowd, and strike the air with an empty and dying sound. It is not thus with select and well chosen language, or with the soundness and severity of reason; their impression is durable.

Never did declamation so loudly extol equality and patriotism, and never have the thoughts and professions of men inclined so much to aristocracy.

The halls of the different districts, which ought to be the receptacle of assemblies, tranquil in their disposition, and occupied under the auspices of good sense in the discovery of melioration and improvement, have resounded with the pompous discourses of our modern rhetoricians. The ear is filled with sounding nothings, and the prudent and sober citizen, unversed in the art of taking men by storm, has been obliged to be silent; because he possessed no other talent, than what was necessary to announce

nounce with clearness the result of experience and judgment. Our journals, that ought to be merely the faithful records of the events that interest us, are become the organs of every unruly passion, and scatter by means of imposition and falshood, the fuel of sedition. Thus all the world have turned journalist, author and pamphleteer, and think to excuse by a common law, an undertaking, to which they are wholly unequal. They glut us with their remarks even to satiety : "*be that can, may read them.*"

GALLERY

G A L L E R Y
OF
P O R T R A I T S,

A M P H I A R A U S.

(Mr. de Maupeou, Chancellor of France.)

THE love of pleasure contributed to adorn his early years, and even enabled him to triumph over certain domestic chagrins, the fruits of a marriage, greatly advantageous in the common acceptation, but ill assorted and unequal. His attachment to learning was slender, and he was more than indifferent to the study of law.

Meanwhile he no sooner became a member of that celebrated corps*, according to some the

* The parliament of Paris.

depository of the laws, and according to others their master and their tyrant, than he discovered in the frequent convulsions of the magistracy, an occasion that enabled him to distinguish himself from the crowd. It cost him no pains to assume the habit of submitting his half-formed projects to the disposition of events, and of moulding to the taste of the different ministers, who have so rapidly succeeded to political power, a character and disposition naturally docile, which was formed by repeated experiments to an unresisting suppleness.

From submission to submission he at length arrived to the dignity of first president. He was neither the man of the king, nor the man of the parliament; he was the slave of circumstances. The duke de Choiseul at that time filled with eclat the great offices of administration. Amphiaras was his creature, and subjected to him his department, his person, and the influence of the magistracy. A short time after, Aspasia*, that singular example of how much beauty can do in favour of a woman, and how much weakness can effect to the disadvantage of a prince,—Aspasia, I say, rose to the highest degree of favour; Amphiaras declared himself her partisan, her advocate, and, in addition to all this, her *cousin*. One of the royal satraps† was engaged in a struggle against a parliament, a province and public opinion. The king was willing to indemnify his servant, to pardon what was past, and to impose mutual silence. Amphiaras immediately offered his

* Countess du Barri.

† Duke d'Aiguillon, governor of the province of Bretagne.
services;

services, to destroy every trace of these dangerous accusations, and of the equivocal replies that had been made to them.

It has however been asserted by many persons, that Aspasia obtained the royal concurrence to this measure without the privity of the chancellor.

A conduct like this opens the eyes of men upon the true character of an officer of state ; and a hundred other instances, which had preceded this, might have enabled the duke de Choiseul to understand the complexion of his creature. But where is the man of understanding, over whom wheedling and flattery possess no influence ? Where is the minister, who is now in favour, and who does not think that he shall always have time enough to destroy a puppet of his own creation ? Where is the ingenious and honest man, that suspects all the manœuvres of perfidy, or is acquainted with the crooked paths in which it delights to wander ?

Be this as it may, it was the duke de Choiseul, who raised Amphiaraus to the highest rank, and it was Amphiaraus that banished the duke de Choiseul to his country seat. The circumstances are well known, and it is better merely to hint at them for the sake of persons that are unacquainted with them, than to transcribe them. Let us observe the operations of Amphiaraus : we discover in them, not a systematical proceeding, to which circumstances are compelled to modify themselves ; but a minister, easily yielding to the fluctuations of the court, and endeavouring to improve them in subservience to his general views. He was actuated by

ambition ; by the impulse of revenge against a corps, that had humbled, and that desired to punish him ; by an anxiety to deliver himself from that painful sentiment of gratitude, which subjects one man to the slavish obedience of another, upon pain of being branded with the contempt of the world ; in fine, by that ill omened activity, in which men are continually kept that breathe the air of courts.

How shall we otherwise account for all the unprecedented manœuvres employed in the affair of the satrap ? Amphiaras might have served him without staining the dignity of the *smarre* (robe), and without exposing himself to the mortifications of the resolution of 6 September 1770, concerning the sitting of the king in parliament for the purpose of suppressing the minutes of the process commenced against the commandant of Bretagne.

It was this resolution, pointed against the chancellor, which ought to be regarded as the first cause of the Gallic revolution. The parliament, and the first magistrate of the kingdom, swore upon the altar of vengeance to throw away for ever the scabbard of peace.

The first act of vengeance was the edict of 27 November, which overturned in a moment the fundamental laws respecting the registering the royal decrees. The parliamentary registry was an ideal resistance, which the people were conceived impowered to oppose, through the organs of the magistracy, to the despotic volitions of the sovereign. This idea, like all the empty pageants that have engaged the attention of the world, in itself was nothing. But it slackened

slackened the rapidity of tyrannical power, it abridged the evils of absolute government, and it caused a few rays of eternal truth to be occasionally exhibited before the unobserving eyes of authority.

It is probable, that Amphiaraus, like many other persons we could name, will occupy a place in history, without its being in the power of history to make him sufficiently known. What we discover is, that he was ambitious, that he was more eager to be talked of than to acquire true reputation, that he was better formed for enterprize than for invention, and that he trusted more to his stars than to his abilities. If it be alledged that revenge was his first-motive, it cannot be denied. But, if it be added, that his measure was a bad one, this is a point that will admit of dispute.

From the moment in which his exile commenced, the rhymesters, the epigrammatists, the pamphleteers have been silent. Does it not follow, that his person was more hated than his measures condemned? Does not the very conspiracy, that was formed against his innovations, plead strongly in their favour? Who has ever denied, that the obtaining of justice was disgracefully expensive, that the privileges of the parliaments have been too large, that the sale of offices introduced into their body a youth, rich and unexperienced; a class of plebeians, easily corrupted and insensible to the touches of honour; an ignorance, presumptuous in its disposition, and too often attended with success? A great part of these abuses sunk before the projects of Amphiaraus; and do not

the decrees of the National Assembly plead in his justification?

Perhaps moral society has more to reproach him with, than political history; and, were it not for certain delicate considerations, over which individuals are bound to extend a veil, that liberty would probably be restored to him, which he would no longer use either for Versailles or for Paris.

He, who has been accustomed to reflection, and has tasted the sweets of rural tranquility, can scarcely wish for the tumultuous residence of cities, and would be unpardonable should he regret the tempestuous element of a court.

P E R I S T H E N E S.

(Mr. De Sartine, Minister of State.)*

NEVER was a face better formed to perplex the physiognomist, whether we consider him as placed in that office †, the creation of despotism and the victim of anarchy; or whether we follow him to his seat in administration, which he obtained by the most refined intrigue; we are presented with a soul of clay under the exterior of disinterestedness, and with a despot who employs popularity as one of the engines of his machinations.

Peristhenes was appointed to the odious office of a spy upon his fellow-subjects. Tell me, reader, what is the true character of a lieutenant of the police, the secret executioner of vengeance, the professed informer against delinquents, the cat's-paw of ministers, the pimp of courtiers and kings, the detector of the faults of men, the superintendant of a thousand shameful sacrifices made to the public safety, the jailor of every prison, the protector of every vice? His soul is the common sewer in which the unprincipled and profligate disburthen themselves of their guilty secrets. He can employ none, but those blasted characters, who to escape the

* This title is bestowed upon every person who has a right to sit in the king's principal council, and generally continues with them when they cease to have any share in administration.

† Lieutenant-general of the Police, formerly held by Mr. de Sartine.

gallows are obliged to furnish a periodical number of their brother criminals to the hands of justice. Can the man, who stoops to so base a trade, possess any remnant of modesty or shame?

Accordingly observe Peristhenes at court; see him the slave of every one he approaches, importuning the honour of being employed by the great, vaunting to one man his success in having rescued from the sentence of the law a patronised villain; and to another, his having facilitated the frauds of the beauty who adds to the lustre of her charms, the lucre of *lanquenet*; to a princess, the having plunged in the horrors of a dungeon the impudent satirist who dared laugh at her follies; to a minister, the having palsied the hand, that had ventured to trace his political blunders, and to calculate his financial depredations.

Observe Peristhenes in the metropolis, regaled with the prostituted praise of a multitude of persons of every class, who came to purchase his sanction for terrifying their fellow-citizens, or for extorting from them their property, to be converted into the wages of profligacy and sloth. He refuses aloud what his agents disposed of unobserved. To one man he promises the death of his enemy, to another the liberty of his confederate. Would he reprimand? Reproof in his mouth is converted into cruelty and insult. Does beauty prostitute itself to him to save the life of a criminal? He is all mildness and clemency.

Observe Peristhenes in his office, sanctioning imposture with his passport, distributing his rewards to the calumniator and the liar, cutting
off

off his unfortunate victims without discrimination, signing before he reads, reading without attention; cheated by a clerk, misled by a spy, made the tool of all about him. He examines nothing, he hears nothing, nothing is studied, nothing developed; but judgment, decision, execution are precipitate and prompt. To no purpose are the tears of anguish, the roarings of despair, the piercing cries of injured innocence; he sets his foot on the victims of abuse, and runs to forget the emotions of their distress amidst the haunts of sensuality.

Observe Peristhenes in his visit to those mansions of tears, where passion, ebriety and the want of reflection, expiate in infectious dungeons a momentary crime, that reason values not, and repentance has disavowed. His unmoistened eye wanders among these asylums abhorred by humanity; he receives petitions never to be opened, and retires in haste, lest the picture of distress should soften his mind, lest it should awaken that sentiment we denominate pity, that the hard-hearted man is able to silence, but that he can never extirpate.

Such was Peristhenes. For ten years the topic of well-earned curses and unthinking praise. His exterior composed, his countenance regulated, full of affected kindness, destitute of penetration and mind. His conversation was dry and reserved; he endeavoured to assume the silent manner of a person of ability, but he betrayed himself, because his way of listening to others bespoke the fool: jealous as Dandin *, licentious as a master of requests, hypocritical

* A low character in one of Moliere's comedies.

as a school-keeping abbé. Such was this censor of the public manners, such was this living organ of Gallic law.

Peristhenes was naturally ambitious. Judge whether the passion was not increased by a success, that raised him to office in spite of every prejudice against him ! Unassisted by education, unfavoured by wealth, having neither native virtue nor foreign patronage, he had passed the ordinary limits, and he determined to sit down contented with nothing short of a seat in the council of the sovereign.

He was nominated a minister, and he felt no remorse in seizing upon a department, to which he possessed not the slightest pretensions. What could be more astonishing, than to see a lawyer, issuing his orders to the army of France ; a plebeian, placed at the head of the first nobility in the world ; a scavenger and a night-man, superintending the fleets of nations ? Fleets are built under his orders, chains of galley-slaves crowd our dock-yards, the magazines are filled with naval stores, provisions of all kinds are collected in abundance. Two things only Peristhenes forgot. Where should he get money to defray the expence, or sailors to man the fleet ? Our resources were exhausted ; our men were disheartened.

Shall my countrymen be for ever afflicted with the same disease ? Will they for ever imagine, that they are fit for every thing, because they covet every thing ?

We cannot follow Peristhenes through the whole of his administration. Envy, he says, deprived him of his office. Alas, he is mistaken ! It was not even his want of ability : but the intrigues,

intrigues, in which his place gave him an opportunity to mix, were directed against a party, that was then admired for talents and supported by popular applause. This party improved its advantage to tumble down the pigmy, who had not had skill enough to place him under the protecting shade of a giant, which could alone have lengthened out his precarious existence.

I 5 PESCENNIUS.

P E S C E N N I U S.

(*Mr. le Noir, Librarian to the King, late Lieutenant-general of the Police.*)

TO paint the mind of Pescennius, we take instability for the central figure, and we surround it with the faults which instability engenders. Pescennius has done much mischief with little malignity, and produced calamity to gratify the vengeance of others. A magistrate, in the tumultuous scenes of Paris, that stooped to serve the passions of others, and made himself friends by the multiplication of victims : such was Pescennius.

Men are not always employed in doing mischief ; they think sometimes of the acquisition of wealth. The cunning man never labours for himself alone, and, in whatever he invents, has the skill to provide a douceur for the great man above him. The patron himself refuses a bribe, because his subalterns accept them with profusion.

Pescennius, it is said, has received many douceurs, but never at the expence of the state. The ladies of easy virtue, the gamesters by profession were proper objects of his animadversion ; and accordingly he obliged them to pay an annual sum, for the purchase, as it were, of their licence. Pescennius established under him a sort of chancery. He had his decrees and his seal, and the emoluments of this office were distributed

distributed in various lots, of which he reserved the most considerable for himself.

Certain incorporated societies were every moment in want of a sentence or a bye law in their favour. He indulged them in their demand, but he required of them a fee, and with the utmost generosity gave the decree they demanded, when they had paid the tax he imposed. All this excited but little attention; and, if some malcontents thought proper to murmur, the *bicêtre* * opened its cells at their voice, and all was tranquility and peace.

Pescennius was not a handsome man. Accordingly the women, who persuaded him that an expressive countenance was the best recommendation to the sex, ingrossed his influence and dictated to his will. Pescennius was not learned; if a man of wit did but observe, that natural ability and the attractive graces of a lively conversation were the most desirable of all accomplishments, he was secure of every favour and indulgence Pescennius had to bestow. Pescennius had no pretensions to an honourable birth; the nobleman, who condescended to extol the dignity of a citizen, and was contented to stoop to that precious equality, the real acquisition of which has been the stimulus to the revolution, had Pescennius for his unresisting vassal.

Pescennius put all the world into prison, and afterwards he was willing to set all the world at liberty. Thus he alternately gratified the malignant and the virtuous, and pursued his favourite chimera, the gaining universal good-

* A sort of prison something of the nature of a Bridewell.
will.

will. How could he forget, that, when we decide in no man's favour, we interest no man's partiality? He, who gains from you, dreads your irrefolution, and he whom you refuse, exclaims upon your injustice.

When we expose ourselves to a certain kind of ridicule, we have no longer a claim upon the commiseration of criticism. To pass at once from the giving audience to prostitutes to the superintendence of a national library, is somewhat too violent a transition. There are offices, that suppose a considerable share of general information; and it is absurd in no ordinary degree, to accept of such an employment, when we are totally destitute of all its qualifications. Mankind are then forced upon reflections, so much the more severe to the subject of them, because they are true.

Pescennius has been convicted of no crime; but his name has been mentioned in so many improper transactions, he has patronised characters so equivocal, he has engaged in enterprizes so arbitrary, that, though his character be not ruined, it is exposed to an uncommon degree of suspicion. The public will not consent to find themselves always in the wrong; they will compromise the matter; they are contented to confess some exaggerations; but they assert a certain quantity of truth in the rumours they entertain, and this quantity in Pescennius's case is sufficient to blot a man's whole history.

Had he still continued in his obnoxious office, even though he had employed his latter years in repairing the errors of his outset, his catastrophe would probably have been tragical. Popular indignation had marked its victims, and they

could find no safety but in voluntary banishment. The sword of Damocles * was less threatening to the wretch over whom it was suspended, than the vengeance of their country to the objects of proscription.

France, that has so often and so inconsiderately assumed a rank higher than all other nations, experiences at this moment a cruel reverse. Almost all the men, who six months ago were intrusted with her administration, are fugitives, incapable, or worse; and, since the revolution, what citizen has appeared to repair our misfortunes and heal our calamities? From the unobserved level of a class hitherto neglected, a few active men have sprung up; but they have unfortunately confounded audacity with courage, licentiousness with liberty, fanaticism with zeal, distraction with spirit, appearances with truth, errors with crimes, and inbred vices with transient abuse.

Pescennius was one of these ill chosen ministers. Flexible in his morals, undecided in his character, unprincipled in the system of government, his resolutions were unaccompanied with energy, his measures had neither regularity nor connexion, he had no attachment to his country, no true love to his species. The arts he patronised out of ostentation; industry he favoured, because he was teized into it; establishments he supported, for he gained by them. The great machine he never pretended to con-

* A courtier, for whom Dionysius the younger, willing to give him an idea of the state of royalty, prepared a magnificent entertainment; at the same time causing a sharp and glittering sword to be suspended over his head by the ligature of a hair.

duct ; he barely kept it in motion. Yielding at this and the other moment to the importunity of the great, to the misguided influence of the sex, to the artful dexterity of knaves ; the sport in a word of a thousand foreign influences, that rendered him their accomplice or their engine, without his so much as suspecting his real situation.

Chabrias * promised him the title of minister, and from that moment Chabrias was master of the secrets of his enemies, and could either prevent or resist the blows that they aimed at him : In the mean time he was sincere in his promise, but was himself defeated by hoary Vergennes and the ambitious Breteuil. The latter conceived he had an exclusive right to dispose of his own instrument, and the former was resolute that he would have nothing to fear from a man whom he could not esteem. This double mistake rendered two men inimical to each other, who indeed never declared war, but who reciprocally employed that secret malignity, which is certainly not less efficacious to undermine a rival, than the open declaration of irreconcilable vengeance.

* Mr. de Calonne.

C A S C A.

(*Marshal de Castries, late Secretary of State for the Naval Department.*)

IS a man assuming and haughty? He obliges us to ask why; and this *why* leads to dangerous inquiries. Why did an officer of cavalry intrude him into the superintendence of the naval department? If heaven have denied to us largeness of capacity, why do we seek after important trusts? If we are neither learned nor ingenious, if we cannot judge of the discoveries of others nor add discoveries of our own, why do we do every thing with an air of emphasis and importance? If we be unable to decide upon any question, if we want assistance from all the world, why do we neglect and maltreat those who should aid us?

Are we unfit to judge of the principles of a constitution? We are not entitled to plead the cause of aristocratical despotism; we are bound to descend from the height of ministerial elevation. Our duty is by so much the more easy, because, if we descend half way, we are then exactly in the place for which nature designed us.

Casca found it so pleasant a thing to reign over a part of France! Favours to distribute, preferences to bestow, distinctions to be made, encouragements, dignities, employments, all were at his disposal. It was even a favour to suffer a man to see you; but this miserable im-

position

position is for ever destroyed ! Return to your sublime offices, you insolent servants of the public ! crouch before your true masters the people of France ! merit their indulgence by your exertions, and their favour by your zeal ! Strip yourselves of the exterior of insolence, and learn to be respected for true virtue, not for specious appearances !

Casca was too undistinguishing in his confidences. He listened with willingness to the tales of a spy of a certain rank (for in France, as in other countries, there are spies of all descriptions), and he suffered himself to be guided by those officious subalterns, who have always an intrigue, a slander and a lie in their pockets.

Casca, one of the thousand victims of ambition, has not indeed tarnished his well-earned laurels, but has lost the reputation he might have derived from a moderate understanding and a prudent character. He is an honest man, a word too loose for applause, a praise too common to flatter. What extraordinary merit, not to intrigue for the sake of gain, when a man has an income of six hundred thousand livres* ! What astonishing philosophy, to sit down with a satisfied mind, when a man has united in his person every species of dignity and decoration ! What prodigious forbearance, to dismiss the dreams of ambition, when a man is afflicted with a malady that renders him incapable of business ! But Casca is not intitled to this extraordinary commendation. Casca sacrifices every day to the tutelar divinity of a

* 25,000*l.* per annum.

court, intrigue. His sacrifices indeed are not within the reach of public observation ; his importunity is not vehement and indiscreet ; he does not risk every thing for the accomplishment of his wishes. Like those skilful mechanics who conceal the main spring of their machine, Casca acts by his family, by his creatures, by his friends, by a multitude of idle and laborious wretches, whom he soothes with deceitful hopes or retains with petty rewards.

Casca possesses the singular talent of labouring hard and doing nothing. He writes as much as a lawyer's clerk ; he dispatches messengers this way and that way ; he gives every body an audience ; he even listens to you with complaisance ; his table is open to every man that will sit down at it ; and all for the sake of the public service. By what strange fatality is it, that nothing results from such extraordinary efforts ? It is that his compositions are weak and unsystematical ; that his messages have neither a judicious motive, nor a perspicuous object ; that in discussion he has neither science, nor skill, nor penetration. He is redundant in expression and weak in reasoning ; ready to answer, but slow to comprehend ; specious in discourse, but unused to the severity of calculation.

France pardoned him the slenderness of his capacity ; but she will not pardon him his desertion of Narfes * ; of whom he was the confidant and the friend, to whom he owed his political existence, and who opened all the resources of the state for the execution of his projects, when he had denied them to his predecessor.

* Mr. Necker.

for. The minister of finance refused to embrace the aristocratical party, and Casca resolved to oblige him to do so. But Casca was but a pigmy in comparison of Narses; and Narses, without being a Hercules, dispersed with ease the petty projects and intrigue of a titled slave.

CHABRIAS.

CHABRIAS.

(*Mr. de Calonne, late Controller-general of the Finances of France.*)

HAD any one ventured to predict to Chabrias, that his dismissal from office was a favour conferred upon him, and that his retreat to a foreign country was the wisest step he could have chosen, the author of the prediction would neither have been received nor understood. Meanwhile nothing is more true. O, mortals! upon what is it that you bestow the names of understanding and reason!

Chabrias is no ordinary man. Let us endeavour to paint his likeness. When he took his first step in the career of life, he disdained obstacles, and he swore to render himself distinguished. Appointed attorney-general to a commission, whose office was to avenge a minister * and to fix upon a culprit, he was assiduous in the business in which he was employed, but did not enter into it with eagerness and inconsideration. His enquiries were severe, but they were not unjust. An imprudent magistrate † was destined to expiate with his life, an error he had adopted, rather than a crime he had perpetrated. Had it not been for Chabrias, the scaffold of Saint Malo would not have been erected in vain. In the mean time the public refused to acknowledge in the Breton magis-

* Duke d'Aiguillon.

† M. la Chalotais.

trate * any thing but a martyr, and they regarded his judges as so many executioners. Chabrias suffered the more severely, because he was unfortunately the most skilful and enlightened of those judges.

The intendant of Metz † suffered for this servile complaisance. Chabrias stood in need of his ability, to elude the scenes, that the Breton officers prepared for him on every side, that they might reduce the magistrate to the necessity of either withdrawing himself or of retracting. But he was sufficiently acquainted with the characters of mankind; he knew that popular odium is fleeting and transitory, and that influence and situation outlive censure.

He was appointed to preside in another province, and he there displayed the talents, upon which he founded his pretensions to the office of minister.

The disinclination of the prince long kept him at a distance; but he was indefatigable in his pursuits, and his name and his talents were unavoidably attended to, when weakness and intrigue made it necessary to have recourse to a new minister.

The empire of talent is great and extraordinary. Chabrias was qualified, to explain himself with perspicuity and ease, to insinuate a wholesome and a just opinion without appearing to suggest it. He knew the value of temporary expedients, and he perceived at a single glance the excellencies and the defects of any project that was submitted to him. He was one

* See Private Life of Louis XV.
which Mr. de Calonne was appointed.

† An office to

of those ministers, whom you may persuade, but whom you cannot deceive. His coadjutors had sufficient proof of his penetration and his genius. How then did it happen, with all these advantages, that Chabrias did not give birth to the prosperity of France? It was because he was a man of urbanity, and desired to be at the same time agreeable and useful.

The man of urbanity is he, who is unwilling to lose a single suffrage, who is anxious to be panegyrised by the women, to be sung by the poets, to be carved by the statuaries, and to be loved by men of wit. All these successes were obtained by Chabrias; but to gain and secure them it was necessary to grant more than he ought to have granted : hence his prodigality. Prodigality forces us upon expedients; expedients give birth to projects; projects are the offspring of eccentric minds; and to such minds it becomes necessary to have recourse. A certain order of men surround the minister in consequence; and this circumstance lessens his reputation, and opens a door to detraction, which from that moment erects all its batteries against him. These batteries cannot be disarmed, but by bringing over the matrosses to our side; money is the instrument of gaining them, and the moment we attempt to purchase, the price grows double. The resources of the state can no longer equal their demands; the minister refuses compliance; and these wretches immediately desert and turn, against the author of their beginning fortune, the benefits they have received at his hands. The struggle of party commences; factions are formed, and the produce of the public treasury is divided between
the

the demands of government and the efforts that are made to disconcert its enemies.

Such is the history of Chabrias. Uneconomical in matters of detail, he repaired these faults with interest, by the most brilliant operations. A bad steward, a good financier, an able minister, a true statesman; such is what he was, and what his country would have found him. But his levity continually exposed him to the adopting without examination men, operations and plans, that tarnish the glory of those wiser measures, which sprung from his own reflexion and were the children of his own understanding.

What then is the nature of this unfortunate quality, this levity? It is, that a man divides his attention between business and pleasure; it is, that a man gives to affairs a single moment, to intrigue whole hours of his time, and devotes his evenings to the sex. It is, that he reads without studying, listens without reflecting, and argues without judgment and determination. It is, that he prefers the most expeditious methods, that he is disheartened by objections and difficulty, that he dreads to consult men of severe argument and nice calculation. Wit amuses him, gaiety allures, experience tires, timidity shocks, precautions disgust. He judges with precipitation, he yields to importunity, he is inaccessible to merit. What we call levity is made up of rash promises, lavish hopes, and vague and inconsiderate proposals.

Chabrias had powerful enemies to encounter. Among them we distinguish two, very unlike in their character, Narses and Cleomenes*.

* Mr. Necker, and the cardinal de Loménie, archbishop of Sens.

The former expected to crush him at once under the giganticness of his virtue; he has blotted out the memory neither of his talents nor his measures. The latter converted the power of his place into a battery against him, and has himself fallen below the dignity of being hated. Chabrias is still pursued even in banishment with the most unrelenting severity; and Cleomenes, the author of all our calamities, the most incapable of ministers, detested by his victims and despised by men of reflection, is suffered to exist without impeachment or enquiry.

Chabrias believed that he had supporters, and they were only friends, mistresses, apologists, or companions of his social hours. The whole world indeed has not abandoned him; but those only have remained faithful, upon whom he never conferred a benefit. They judged him, from a knowledge of what he was, and not from mere reputation. A man, who would succeed, must be formed for the circumstances in which he is placed. For ever be the minister proscribed, who, when we had published our situation and avowed our distress, was guilty of depredation upon the national estate! But, if there were a time, when a minister had no will of his own and no power to change that of others, it would surely be in some degree unjust to proscribe that minister.

Whoever loves pleasure ought to renounce the character of a statesman. But unfortunately state affairs are commonly made subservient to the pleasures of the minister. Chabrias was too lavish in confiding the secret of his character to so many women. The fair in every rank
were

were agreeable to him ; and she, who devoted the gifts of nature to the vilest prostitution, sometimes found his heart more accessible, than the woman, who is misled by an excessive sensibility, and who has always to struggle with the goodness of her principles and the calamity of her situation.

It would not be impossible to demonstrate, at the time when Chabrias was in office, that rectitude of conduct was an imaginary pursuit; that economy would have been less useful to the state than profusion ; and that nations may arrive at a degree of corruption, at which all the efforts of talents and virtue are unable to serve them.

CLEOMENES.

CLEOMENES.

(Cardinal de Lomenie, Archbishop of Sens, late Principal Minister.)

HE would not have died without regret and eulogium, if he had been able to avoid the rock of being a minister. It was in that brilliant situation that his fame became annihilated, and he showed to the world the immense distance there is between genius and ingenuity, between the dignity of ambition and the meanness of intrigue. At the head of the finances we found him a man, totally unqualified for the subject of revenue, and who, at the end of the eighteenth century, carried into office the exploded routine of the ancient farmers-general; we found him a man, whom every thing in the affairs of a great kingdom embarrassed, and to whom twenty years of a partial administration appeared to have taught not one useful lesson.

Cleomenes at the head of a diocese, surrounded with underlings and flatterers, lulled with the sweet sound of applause, pointed out by fame as the proper successor to great offices; fluent in expression, perspicuous in manner, specious in character, independent in sentiment, courageous in the suppression of abuse, had furnished to his friends the occasion rather than the subject of an eulogium, which had circulated for fifteen years. At Paris, when persons are accustomed to praise a man, it is with unwillingness they retract their verdict, and they

yield a voluntary admiration to the idol they have created.

Five and twenty years ago incredulity and strength of mind were conceived to be synonymous. A bishop, who had the courage to be an infidel, was of course idolized by the philosophical party. At a period when men had sworn to extirpate fanaticism and credulity, Cleomenes showed an indifference to the affairs of religion; and this was no great sacrifice in him, since he never formed to himself principles upon any subject in the world.

This unfortunate turn of mind is the everlasting foe of morality and truth. Every thing to such a person appears in masquerade. Ambition assumes the names of energy and fortitude; voluptuousness is judicious relaxation; luxury is the debt we owe to an elevated station; the desire of engrossing a thousand emoluments is foresight and prudence. In what I have now said, I have painted Cleomenes on the most favourable side. I might have added, that the undisguised display of his salacity was an outrage upon professional decorum and national manners.

There is another sort of obligation, the obligation of friendship, that is still more coercive in its character. Cleomenes contracted engagements of this sort, but he violated them like a courtier, or trampled upon them like a knave. The first instance to which I allude, is in respect to a man, equal in rank to himself by his station in the church, but greatly above him by his civil preferments. Cleomenes undermined him by degrees, by the culpable practice of exposing upon all occasions his vanity, his egotism

tism and his immorality. A second instance relates to a sort of minister, who found himself obliged to gratify a few, to offend many, and to expose himself to the arrows of ingratitude. Cleomenes wilfully assisted in making his friend ridiculous. He engrossed his favour, he left to him undiminished all the odium of his refusals, and he engrossed by his influence over him the disposal of his favours. My last instance is less that of a friendly intimacy, than of a professed homage paid to the qualities of a man, whose fortune will long occupy the pen of history. Cleomenes linked his own fate to the principles of his hero; he pretended to adopt, rather than really espoused them, that the numerous partisans of the disgraced statesman might attach themselves for the execution of his plans to their great apologist. At length he arrived to the pinnacle of his wishes. But no sooner was he in office than he abjured the tenets of his creator, forgot his vaunted excellence, united with his enemies, plunged France in confusion, and scattered with an unsparing hand the seeds of the misfortunes that now overwhelm us.

Is Cleomenes sufficiently punished in being driven from his native country? What then, shall we see the ecclesiastical purple turned into the reward of infidelity? Shall we see favours of all kinds heaped upon the apostle of despotism, and wealth descending in a golden shower upon the destroyer of our fortunes? No: there are victims we owe to public vengeance; and, if the last punishment be not inflicted upon them, we have still the engines of poverty, shame and inexpiable abhorrence. Wretched indeed would be our situation, if it were no

longer in our power to blast the perfidious citizen and the guilty minister !

There are men, who are grown grey in courts, have consecrated their lives to the ordures of cabal, and employed their guilty lucubrations in preparing the disgrace of a minister and the elevation of their own creatures. The disciples of anarchy, they build their hopes upon the mistakes of a sovereign, upon the fluctuation of administrations, upon the dissensions of government, upon the disorders of the state, upon the depredation of the finances. It is from this dishonourable class, that the depositaries of the public interests are ordinarily chosen. Is it then to be wondered at, that the people have hitherto been sacrificed to the avidity and luxury of the great ; and two or three hundred families have shared among them the produce of the national soil, or that the community, restored to its rights, demands from its spoilers a severe account of three hundred years of abuse, and are resolute to annihilate for ever so tyrannical a government ?

I confess that the term of *our country* has no determinate signification ; but, if still something remained in the world of this glorious prejudice ; if it were possible ; if it were possible to revive the extinguished flame, we should certainly not seek in the soul of a priest, who has no posterity to provide for and no danger to fear, the sacred embers of this celestial flame.

God forbid, that I should seek to weaken the respect of my country for the catholic religion ! I cannot however conceal the truth, that priests of all religions are contracted and selfish. They regard the rest of their species as fair game ; or
they

they imagine that they have in them a particle of the divine nature, and that the opinions of mankind are at their disposal.

Nothing is more immediately necessary, than an alteration in the forms of clerical education, and a change of character in this class of men, who, in the midst of their anxiety to serve their God, have almost forgotten to be citizens of the world. The church has furnished a considerable number of ministers to the state. They have promoted the grandeur of the sovereign, they have never sought the welfare of the people. Neither Suger, nor Richelieu, nor Ximenes, nor Mazarine, will furnish an exception to this principle. Fleuri alone exerted an economy, in which the people found their share of benefit.

Cleomenes was no more capable of saving, than of expending the revenues of the state with propriety. Whichever of these had been necessary, he would have proved equally injurious to the public weal. He would have imagined that the public could be benefited by private injustice, and not that the increase of national ease was the road to national economy.

When the duke de Choiseul was in place, he was reproached with volatility; he was a god, if we compare him with the majority of his successors. He understood the character of Cleomenes, whom he would never call any thing but *the abbé*. He found him useful in diminishing the folly of monastic superstition; but he would never have suffered him to take a step in politics by the dictate of his own judgment.

Cleomenes has made his advantage of circumstances, if however this be to succeed, to live without glory and without friendship, and

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at last to seek a refuge in a foreign country, where the best he can hope for is flattery or commiseration.

B A R G E S.

(Baron de Breteuil, late Chief of the Council of the Finances, and formerly Secretary of State for the Home Department.)

HE is not destitute of natural ability, but his talents themselves are converted into vices, because, the soul being radically debased, it debased the instruments it employed. That he might arrive at high situation he thought it requisite to employ all sorts of means. Arrived there, it was necessary at whatever price to perpetuate his political existence; firmly fixed in a slippery situation, he applied himself to provide for the future, and to parry the strokes of fortune. In this progress, of how many contrarieties has he been guilty? Hence the necessity to avenge himself of this man, and to extirpate the other; to banish a third, to imprison a fourth. Hence that detested mass of guilt, and *rouerie**, a word happily forgotten and

* Crimes, which entitle their perpetrator to the being broken on the wheel, (*la roue.*)

which

which we revive with regret, but which the character of Barges compels us to use, since this word only can be in unison with the feelings of the author and his readers.

Public vengeance took away the life of Flesselles *, and Barges is still alive ; that Barges, to whom the Bastille was indebted for its inhabitants ; who turned administration into a tennis court, his closet into a brothel, his office into the den of injustice, the police into an engine of resentment, and the name of his king into a watch-word of terror.

Barges, while he served his country abroad, concealed under an ostentatious splendour the baseness of his intrigues, and under the ability of his deputies the mediocrity of his understanding. He purchased from others what he could not furnish from his own stock, and filled, without personal miscarriage, without injury to the state, and without honour to his country, a career, that so many people have trod, that it would demand an uncommon degree of weakness to miscarry. He has just that portion of ability, that enables him to supply in insolence what he wants in worth ; and just that style of effrontery, which imposes upon the headless multitude, who are for ever warned and for ever cheated. Prince, beloved by your fellow-citizens ! banish from your councils a man, whom France cannot see about your person without

* Late *prevot des marchands*, or mayor of Paris, who was put to death on the memorable day of the capture of the Bastille, 14 July.

† The baron de Breteuil was appointed chief of the council of finances 12 July, immediately upon the dismissal of Mr. Necker.

horror !

horror ! The ability we grant him, the spirit we ascribe to him are inadequate and partial, but might perhaps have been employed to a useful purpose. Alas ! what are talents alone, at a moment in which it is requisite to gain the confidence of a nation, who think that they yet hear the clanking of their chains, and who view with indignant regard the artificers of a calamity †, that is suspended indeed, but that is not yet perhaps removed ?

Why has Barges, when he withdrew his person from the public indignation, alledged nothing in favour of his innocence ? Is he indifferent to the good opinion of his countrymen ? Is he incapable of averting their censure ? Either of these motives would be equally injurious to his character.

He is one of those common-place courtiers, who, under the pretence of the knowledge of mankind, are astonished at nothing, are afflicted at nothing, are disturbed at nothing, because to every thing their feelings are dormant.

R H E S I U S.

(*De Cicé, Archbishop of Bourdeaux, Keeper of the Seals.*)

RHESIUS has all those advantages that lead to fortune. I say *advantages*, because it is neither the powers of the understanding, nor the qualities of the heart, that insure success.

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The former are fruitful in envy, and the latter make us avoid the ordinary means of rising in the world.

Activity of understanding, courage of heart, suavity of manners are all of them united in Rhelius. Neither superior to prejudice, nor fettered by virtue, he has been able quietly to remove the obstacles, that envy and ambition opposed to his progress.

The beautiful of the other sex have been denominated high priestesses of the hoodwinked goddess. I know not how far Rhelius is indebted to them, but I know that he had the means to bribe them. If he could not amuse them as an agreeable trifler, he had at least that teasing caprice, which we so frequently see preferred to uniform submission.

It would have been something less singular to see Rhelius at the head of the finances, than in an office of serene and sober dignity. He was twice at the disposal of Louis the Fifteenth. "I will take good care of him," said the monarch; "he is mightily agreeable to me." I conclude, that kings are not always the martyrs of glory.

Rhelius directed his learned researches against the unprofitable usurpers of a property, that has lately been reclaimed by the nation. He was useful in three ways: first, to the state, which is delivered from an unprofitable burthen; next, to the monks, who will recover their liberty; and last of all, to the poor, who will recover their rights.

Another prelate of a more restless ambition whispers to his friends, that Rhelius has stolen a march upon him, and that his apparent disin-

terestedness concealed the unconquerable desire of filling this great legal department; that he himself had for eighteen months speculated upon the event of the first change that should occur, and that a *metaphysical discourse* overturned the wisest scheme in the world.

M O N T A L B.

(*The Count de Saint Priest, Secretary of State for the Home Department.*)

MONTALB was born to rule the minds of his fellow-citizens, and is composed of all those springs which are calculated to burst asunder the fetters of interest. He has that activity of mind, which is engendered by long meditation and by the certainty of the wisdom of his operations. Capable of elevated views, animated with the uncontrollable desire of making men happy, he has the rare courage which enables a man to vanquish the obstacles that his contemporaries oppose to their own welfare, and that commanding eloquence, which springs from a cultivated understanding and a soul of fire.

The career of public business, so brilliant when circumstances are favourable, so painful when fortune does not in some degree co-operate with talents, offered him an occasion of making himself

himself illustrious. He seized it, and triumphed over the petty vengeance of his opponents. In all courts there is a certain number of rich and powerful families who pretend to an influence, that must greatly embarrass ministers, if they know not how to counteract the importunity of men, who solicit in the language of command. Three things characterise our noble courtiers; vanity, ignorance and falsehood. Humble them and they become your enemy, employ them, they ruin every thing they undertake; trust them, and they abuse your confidence. I am not writing a satire or drawing an imaginary figure; I state nothing but the simple truth.

At the same time Montalb has instructed the metropolis in the true difference between competence and luxury, between tranquility and indolence, between honest gain and fraudulent imposition. That sacred probity, which is the life's blood of an extensive commerce, is no longer known; and we have substituted in its room every sort of trick and prevarication. "What would your majesty do," said the regent to Peter the First, "if you had a great town like Paris?" "I would set it on fire" "at four places at once," replied the savage monarch. I ask, what would Peter do, now that Paris is infinitely more corrupt, than it could have been a century ago?

Montalb has formed to himself certain principles from which he has sworn never to depart.

The man, that wishes to be useful to the community, must begin by thwarting individuals; because at present the prosperity of individuals depends upon the calamity of the public. If it were otherwise, if every thing were
sagely

sagely distributed, if there were the least shadow of proportion between human advantages, one would never absorb the portion of a thousand. To restore the equilibrium, it is necessary to take from one and give to another; and it is this operation, that excites the murmurs of the great, and exposes its patron to the attacks of unprincipled avidity.

A man that fartherers a necessary change is of course the satirist of his predecessors in office. If he can consent to accommodate his proceedings to the circumstances of the times, he is lost for ever; the abuses with which he struggles are too mighty for him; the courtiers penetrate his designs, and circumvent him before he has realized them. To succeed, he must march with a firm and rapid step; he must improve the momentary zeal of his sovereign; and he must forget himself, satisfied that the services he renders his country will occasion his fall.

Whatever be the merit of a king, he is but a man. Every man is accessible to the insinuations of flattery and the importunity of friendship; the confidence he has in his representative cannot be exclusive. He has a wife whom he loves, he has a mistress that he adores, or he has personal attendants whom he has converted into friends. These are the engines of cabal for the ruin of a minister. Sometimes they praise his ability, but accuse him of dishonest views; sometimes they assert the integrity of his views, but alas! his genius is unequal to them. Has he weaknesses? In their representation they are metamorphosed into essential defects. Has he defects? They become vices. Has he vices?

vices? They are crimes. Is he invulnerable on this side? He is made the butt of ridicule and satire, till he is forced to attend more to his own preservation, than to the service of the public. He is then led into the commission of an oversight; he is criticised, he justifies himself; his master, astonished that he has need of justification, withdraws something of his confidence in him, and becomes accessible to the counsels of others. Attacked on all sides, he defends himself with spirit, and is ultimately exhausted by the efforts he has made.

A foreigner who is favoured neither by distinguished birth, nor considerable wealth, nor powerful friends, and who has nothing on his side but talents and the favour of his master, finds the former become impotent when the latter is withdrawn. His friends desert him; his creatures gladly shake off the galling yoke of gratitude; his enemies breathe vengeance; the great despise him; knaves thwart him; fools spurn at him; the popular cry pursues him. He finds himself exhausted with the efforts he made to resist his fall, and he scarcely opposes the unjust calumny that would rob him of the merit of what he has actually performed*.

SOSTHENES.

* We give up this character as a riddle to exercise the ingenuity of the reader. The personal misunderstanding between the count de Saint Priest and the reputed author of these volumes, is well known. Mirabeau charged the secretary, with having said to the mob that came from Paris to Versailles, that "they might thank themselves for the famine; "since instead of one monarch they had now twelve hundred," the number of the national Assembly. This charge, after being in some degree repelled, has been suffered to sleep, in a manner

S O S T H E N E S.

(*Marshal de Beauveau, Minister of State.*)

SOSTHENES is naturally brave, ambitious and honest, but of an ordinary understanding. Of the capacity he has, he has made more advantage than might have been expected ; because he was judicious enough to enter into the opinions and sentiments of persons, who are able to supply that in which he was deficient.

His defects have been of service to him. His *hanteur*, for example, has prevented him from mixing in the littleness of intrigue, which, even when it succeeds, has always something mean about it. His indifference to emolument has freed him from those speculations, the ordinary snares of the great, but which Sosthenes has despised.

A faithful friend even at the expence of his fortune, he has carried the heroism of friendship to its utmost excess. The objects of his attachments have been widely different ; but his zeal has been the same, and he has felt as warmly for the severity of the Stoic, as for the effusions of the man of sensibility.

manner that at first sight seems to do honour to the accuser. We would not be understood to lay much stress upon this anecdote, as explanatory of the portrait of Montalb ; but there is an extravagance in the apparent panegyric, that struck us as having some resemblance to an ill-managed irony. The reader will observe that several sentences in the four last paragraphs are transcribed from the portrait of Rabin. Vol. I. p. 52.

Sosthenes

Sosthenes has always attached himself to men of genius. Whether a select society was indispensable to the companion of his life, or that it was the instrument of his reputation, or that he found his own gratification in assembling about him men, who penetrate into futurity, and judge of unborn events.

He has been connected in the same degree of intimacy with four men, the most completely contrasted to each other. One of them devoted to the most entire obscurity, avoided the court, the great, the splendour of life, the pleasures of fashion, and placed his supreme happiness in the reigning over a small number of admirers, whom friendship retained in his suite, and with whose applause his vanity was daily fed. A second, the most amiable of egotists, perhaps the only amiable person of that class that ever existed; who considered pleasure as the most important of all things, business as next, character as the third thing, and duty as the last. The third amused by his volatility and enlightened by his genius; in his slightest concerns he gave to the business in which he was engaged a character peculiar to himself. He united the indulgences of vice with the graces of virtue, carefully abstaining from all that is odious in the first and severe in the last, and never regretting the price that he paid for pleasure or for success. The last had virtue, but it was a thorny virtue; had understanding, but without suavity and without grace; firmness without indulgence; capacity without genius; quickness of apprehension without comprehensiveness of views. How could one man unite himself with souls of so different a complexion? How could he

he accommodate himself to tastes so discordant, and defend systems so unlike? It must be, that the different periods of our life, the different circumstances in which we are placed, make us regard objects in a light altogether dissimilar. Be this as it may, the man, who has been successively the friend of characters, such as we have described, is not to be confounded with the mass of his species.

Sosthenes is become a minister *. He will carry into office the fruits of a long experience, a circumstance that is not to be disdained; he will carry an unprejudiced judgment and a resolute heart. Kings have not always made so happy a choice. His principles are sound, since he dreads equally the calamities of anarchy and the miserable tranquillity of despotism. He has beside accustomed his mind to certain philosophical meditations, which can never be without their use in the affairs of mankind.

It is the characteristic of a prudent man, never to have mixed his name in the scandalous scenes, that the court for fifty years has exhibited. The tyrannical cabinet of the marchioness de Pompadour, the licentious intrigues of the countess du Barri, the conspiracies formed against the virtuous Turgot, the pasquinades and ballads of young Maurepas, the cabals of a restless and itinerant family, and the conspiracies that were formed in favour of disorder, would each in its turn have dishonoured many a courtly name, if dishonour at the court of Versailles were capable of degrees. The name of Sosthenes has never been stained in any of these

* August 1789.

operations, in which power gives to servility the means of selling honours, employments, and whatever is usually found in the train of the great.

Sosthenes experienced a short term of disgrace. He yielded to it, as a man might have done that deserved it. He rejected condolence, he stooped not to justification, and quietly trusted himself to the influence of time, that great master of equity and justice.

CLITOPHON.

(Cardinal de Rohan, Archbishop of Strasbourg.)

CLITOPHON has trusted to a venerable name to adorn him with glory, and has sought to arrive at fortune by the flowery path of pleasure. He had that sort of capacity, which is graceful at twenty-five, and ridiculous at fifty. There is a period in human life, when thoughtlessness partakes of activity and candour; there is a period, when it is the sad result of an abortive understanding.

Nothing is more injurious, than a considerable name, unaccompanied with considerable qualifications; than high offices, without ability
to

to fill them; than an elevated rank, without that dignity which should adorn it.

The mind of Clitophon is not only destitute of useful information, but is crouded with false ideas; illusion there fills the place of truth; a vulgar credulity is the substitute of religion.

He had a place at court *, which might have fixed the desires of his ambition, if he had not possessed it. He made every sacrifice to obtain another, which for his glory he ought to have abandoned, if it had ever been bestowed upon him. The secret for Clitophon to be something, was for him to do nothing; the same moment that saw him active saw him contemptible.

The profession we have chosen must always determine the degree of strictness that ought to characterise our manners. We laugh at that action in one man, which we execrate in another. Human society is sufficiently indulgent; but it forbids, under pain of contempt, a certain publicity in our relaxations.

Misfortunes that are occasioned by imprudence, excite our pity; misfortunes that are caused by intrigue, may excite a momentary sensibility, but quickly leave us cold and indifferent.

The life of Clitophon has been divided into three acts: in the first, we saw him slight and superficial; in the second, intriguing; in the third, icy and unfeeling. Amorous as a grenadier, ostentatious as a farmer-general, speculating as an adventurer, he found in his commerce with the sex mortification and con-

* Great almoner to the king,

tempt,

tempt, in his dependents hypocritical knaves, and in his speculations ruinous law-suits and the loss of reputation.

It is the common place and indiscriminated character, that is equally callous to favours and to affronts; that receives in exactly the same style the quack and the man of science; that amuses itself with vice and employs virtue as its resource; that has a few slavish dependents, but never has a friend; that forgets in the arms of beauty the pangs of exile; whose generosity is ostentation; whose religion is terror; who regards labour as the greatest of evils, and would prefer the basest obscurity to the efforts necessary to restore an injured reputation.

Clitophon is for ever telling us that he is sick of mankind; yet mankind has done every thing for him, and what has he done for them? In the last instance they have summoned him to the august assembly, that is the arbiter of our future destinies. Let Clitophon embrace the rights of the people and the cause of liberty; let him by disinterestedness, by eloquence and by courage, impose upon his enemies an eternal silence respecting the past, and give his partisans a right to restore its reputation from its ashes!

Let him restore to the state that immense wealth, which the poor must share, if the state did not exert itself for the extirpation of poverty; and let him by a life of honourable simplicity expiate the luxury of thirty years! Let him discard the hoary flatterers that surround him; and that build their varying projects and their ambitious hopes upon his insatiable vanity and his unconquerable indolence!

Alas!

Alas ! there is a period in human life when the soul loses all its elasticity. There is a decay in our moral, as well as in our natural faculties. All that remains is the memory, or at most the transient glimmerings of capacity ; and in those cruel moments we feel at once what we ought to do, and our inability to execute it. In the air of a court, the man usually ceases to exist, as soon as he arrives at manhood. What remains for him to do ? To be beneficent in his decay. Thanks be to nature, there is need neither of talents, nor effort, nor application in order to do good* !

Clitophon will devote his last moments to the exercise of religion. The readiness of his faith in things supernatural, the veneration with which he is impressed for the marvellous †, sufficiently show the fate that awaits him. He must have a good sort of piety, full of superstition, as before a sprinkling of miracles, and the usual promise of penetrating successfully into the darkness of futurity ; futurity, the scarecrow of feeble minds, whose desire is to lose nothing of this world, and to secure the happiness of another.

* This seems to be a very unguarded sentence. The author probably means, that a man of fortune without talents and without industry, need not be totally useless. Even in this sense the assertion is sufficiently problematical. If he mean any thing else, he is propagating an error, which surely the man of talents and who feels the utility of talents, should be the last person to entertain.

† The author here alludes to his connection with count Cagliostro.

C U R A S S E S.

(*De la Luzerne, Bishop and Duke of Langres.*)

CURASSES stretches to the utmost extreme the double aristocracy, that of the clergy and that of the nobility. He has not ability enough to be the founder of a sect, and he has too much to be altogether overlooked. He is one of those men, who can do no harm, but can never do good.

The best proof that the aristocracy is incapable of government, is the way in which they have defended their own cause. Was there ever exhibited more imbecility, more unsteadiness? Their proceedings were neither open nor secret; their half-formed projects were divulged before they were absolutely adopted.

Curassès has explained his opinions in a very moderate publication; he has furnished arms against the party that he weakly defends; he has been assiduous in intrigue to gain a temporary office*, in which however talents may be displayed with peculiar advantage. He miscarried in the execution, and was forced to abdicate the curule chair.

I have often asked myself, what is an aristocratical man? Is it a man, that desires that government, that sovereignty, that law should be explicit and single? No. It is he, who would sacrifice the many to the few, who would put human

* President of the National Assembly.

intellect into chains, and elevate prejudice to the throne of reason. It is he, who turns a king into a stalking horse, a nation into a herd of cattle, a citizen into a slave, the public revenue into his private emolument, and the servants of the monarch into his own creatures. It is he, who annihilates order, who cherishes luxury, profligacy, licentiousness and general distress, in order to prevent the human species from recovering that nerve, that elasticity, which conducts them to vigorous undertakings. In fine, it is he, who seeks, by terror or the dungeon, to unnerve the hand of genius, to prevent conspiracies against public happiness from being detected, to preserve to the conspirators the peaceable enjoyment of their infernal machinations.

Curasses is not all this. His soul is not of a temper to bring into play what is most odious in these resources. But it is so difficult to stoop and to descend; and he struggles with vehemence against the imperious commands of necessity.

What mortifies Curasses is the union of the different orders of the state. The ideas of equality and fraternity appear to him very sound in the pulpit of the divine; he could easily return to his palace, and there he sufficiently felt the difference between the dignified prelate and the poor parson whose sermon he had heard. How would Curasses be puzzled to refute the celebrated axiom of Machiavel, *The dissensions of individuals contribute to the welfare of the state!*

Curasses! it does not belong to me to give you advice. Yet from whatever quarter it comes, it must be useful, whenever it is true.

Deign

Deign however to cast your eye on the following passage. It was written by a man of ability, upon a subject, the importance of which is unalterable, but which is particularly useful in the present situation. Its subject is *union*.

“ Every opinion is entitled to respect, because we are to presume that it is suggested by the desire of general benefit: but opinions encounter each other, and, before we decide in favour of one in particular, we are obliged to remain suspended between error and truth. Each of them is presented with equal advantages; nay, it sometimes happens, that truth appears naked and unattractive, while error is decorated with ornament and enforced with eloquence. What is the true remedy for this inconvenience? *Union, union*, that irresistible panacea against the evils of pertinacity. It is union, that composes the understanding and tranquilises the affections; she stills the tumult of the passions, she supercedes personal antipathies, she disenchant the deluded senses, she dissipates the clouds by which truth is obscured, she sheds the rays of distinction upon the apostle of truth; he presents her with modesty, he is received without unfavourable prepossessions.”

G A R I N E T.

G A R I N E T.

(Abbè Gregoire.)

“ HEAVEN has endowed you with a virtuous disposition and a sensible heart. Are these advantages nothing? Why should you place your happiness in public observation? Why should you be irritated with the puerile desire of publishing your opinions? The men, who now flatter you, I know not why, will quickly retract their precipitate eulogiums, and will make you pay the price of their mistake.” Such was the language, to which a man of severe integrity obliged Garinet to listen.

A man, nearly unknown, arrives at Paris; he is talked of. The idea of piercing to the front of this immense crowd at first terrifies him. Meanwhile, does he succeed? His self-esteem is in proportion to the obstacles he has vanquished. The idea of being a member of the sovereign power inspires him with pretensions, and by an incredible metamorphosis a modest parish-priest becomes a statesman. A primitive pastor deserts the service of the altar, plunges into the calculations of finance, and inculcates the laws of economical reform. He forgets the sheep, the wolf and the fold, and devotes himself entirely to profane disputations.

Garinet has employed his pen in the service of the Jews, a nation less unfortunate than they are pretended to be, since they have found defenders

fenders among the men, that are formed to dictate to public opinion. And yet what a nation ! The impure sink of every vice, the deserved outcast of the rest of mankind, supporting their existence by drinking our blood and devouring our flesh ! What are we to think of a society that lives upon theft, usury, rapine and spoil ? Let me not be told of many respectable houses in London, Amsterdam, Bourdeaux and Berlin ! Commerce has dispensed them from swindling and fraud. Meanwhile I impeach in the name of mankind the greater part of the Jews of German Lorraine, of Germany and of Poland. Their industry is deception ; they scatter with niggard hands a few crowns along the soil, that they may come at the moment of harvest, and snatch from the peasant the fruits of his labour, the pledges upon which they advance their perfidious succour ! What shall we say of a people that openly profess the art of selling at a high price the refuse of the merchant ? And such are the sufferers, that, after having employed the pen of twenty eloquent writers, Garinet has also held up to public commiseration !

His motives without doubt are laudable ; he is a citizen, a man, and a philanthropist ; but the desire to reap the reward to which he is entitled, makes him seek the period of appearing, instead of suffering the period to seek him.

If he have not the suavity of the man of the world, he at least escapes the dangers to which such a man is exposed. Beside that your hasty characters, whose reflections come when the business is over, will seldom be found altogether unsuccessful. We prefer the man, whose

logic is weak and irregular, to the man, who considers reason as the first attribute of his nature.

Garinet has figured to himself a mitre suspended over his head. May not that thought be a misfortune ?

C L E M O N.

(Duke d' Orleans.)

A Youth of voluptuousness did not promise to the cause of liberty so zealous a defender and so valuable an apostle. There are faults, that are less our own, than those of the times in which we live. The close of the reign of Louis the Fifteenth held out an invitation to pleasure. Austerity was out of place in a community, where gratification reigned without controul. Clemon yielded to the circumstances in which he was placed ; the age dictated to him, and he obeyed it. He found, that it deserves the name of calamity to be endowed in early youth with an insinuating character.

The desire of comparing two rival nations conducted Clemon repeatedly to the banks of the Thames. He desired to be thoroughly acquainted with the two countries in Europe, which

which have reached the highest degree of civilization; which are indeed full of defects, imperfect in their government, but decidedly superior to every one of their neighbours. He perceived, that it is their emulation, that gives nutriment to their industry, and that enables them always to equal, never to surpass each other. He saw, that the situation of the individual was not more desirable in one country than in the other, and that, exclusively of the criminal jurisprudence, there was little that France need envy to Britain.

She has preceded us in the adoption of liberty, and it was doubtless with her, that Clemon imbibed the generous principles that have electrified the nation. He professed them at a period, when it was unknown what reception Frenchmen would give them, and when it was impossible to foresee, that, victors over prejudice, they would succeed at their first attempt in placing themselves upon an equality with the nations that have divested themselves the most slowly of the vestiges of tyranny. Let us recollect the documents that he sanctioned with his name*, and that encouraged the bailliages to form their instructions upon so excellent a model!

I do not commend Clemon, because he gained the affections of the people, but because he preserved their attachment. To the former it sufficed to awaken the partiality of the citizens for this popular branch of the house of Bourbon; but to the latter there was requisite a conquest

* Instructions given by the duke d' Orleans to his agents in the different bailliages. 8vo. 1789.

over himself, and that of no common species. Clemon has friends in spite of his rank, because he is himself the friend of those, whom he admits into his familiarity. His dependents are contented and happy; for, when our services are unconstrained, our duties convert into pleasures.

Clemon is generous; the people have derived from him succour and relief, men of letters have been benefited by his patronage; and the animosity of a few individuals, who were irritated by the loss of an agreeable promenade *, has been well exchanged for the applauses of Europe. Foreigners of all countries are agreed that there is no edifice that presents such a combination of wealth, conveniences and delight. You may here find luxury and simplicity, solitude and dissipation, the amusements of the open air and theatrical entertainments, the tranquillity of clubs and the tumultuous scenes of a coffee-house. These different views of social life have all of them their pleasures, perhaps all of them their utility.

It is so much the more agreeable to praise Clemon in a certain respect, because his country has not flattered him. He served it with the air of a man who was paying a debt. What is a campaign, what is the gain of a battle, in comparison of whatever may forward, may determine, may complete a revolution?

* The allusion here made is to the gardens of the Palais Royal, which have been covered with buildings by the duke d' Orleans, and constitute at present the most beautiful spot in the city of Paris. The neighbourhood was at first dissatisfied with the loss of their recreation, but have since considered it as a mall of a different form.

Wars depopulate a state ; virtuous examples may alter its character ; the courage of the heart may advance them to a degree of splendour, that the most brilliant conquests could never bestow.

Clemon chose a singular method to conduct his children to the moral goal that he had marked out for them. It required no deep philosophy to inspire the attempt, and success has attended upon its execution. Why should not a woman of intellectual ability, of sound knowledge, of fervent zeal, form the mind of young princes to the love of virtue, and unfold in them the talents that nature implanted ?

He foresaw the sacrifices, which his paper of Instructions would render it necessary for him to make ; and he has advanced a sum greatly beyond the tax that the necessities of his own country imposed upon him.

It will hardly be believed, that Clemon has not gained the unanimous suffrage, even of the party, whose boast it is to have followed his principles. The cause of his moderation has escaped the eyes of the vulgar ; and it has not been considered, that, if he had been more ardent in his measures, he would have had the air of labouring for himself, and not for the public cause. “ But do you know that Clemon—?”—No : I know nothing ; I believe nothing. If ever the dreaded light should force my eyes to see differently, I shall curse the moment in which I drew this portrait.

B R E M U S.

(Duke de Biron.)

WHEN our birth has assigned to us a considerable rank, and we have raised ourselves by our character above that considerable, we are surely entirely to some degree of regard. Such is Bremus. He never conceived, that what he owed to his country had been paid by his ancestors. He has qualified himself to defend her with skill, and to serve her with applause. He has done his part. It is for his country to give scope and activity to the talents he has exerted himself to form.

You will never make of him a courtier, but he will easily become either a general or a statesman. Not that he has not that kind of understanding that renders its possessor agreeable, but that he disdains to devote himself to the art of pleasing, because a mind of a vigorous temper seeks higher objects.

Bremus has examined, measured, and weighed his contemporaries. It is for this reason that his conduct has been somewhat singular. His proceedings have not been those that inclination would have dictated, but those which the state of society forced upon him.

Negotiators are now no longer the spies of the state: the intrigues of a cabinet, or the scandals of a tête-à-tête are no longer the topics of a dispatch: to mislead a minister, to bribe a secretary, and to turn the head of a favourite
are

are no longer the services, that government demands of an ambassador. It is requisite, that he should enter into the confidence of the court where he resides, that he should study their views where they disclose them, that he should predict what they are where they hide them ; it is requisite that he should regulate himself, not by their expressions, but by their actions, and that he should influence, through the great medium of opinion, the counsels and the designs of the government under which he lives. Such are the great functions which Bremus would have discharged with success.

Not that he is not liable to the charge of coldness of apprehension ; but this coldness derives from the knowledge of mankind, and not from the error of his own disposition, and accordingly vanishes, when great and powerful motives are presented to his mind. On the other hand, there is a class of men, whose career begins so early, who run so rapidly through every species of gratification, that the scene of things closes to them, before they properly begin to live.

Bremus has given himself the education of experience, has travelled much, and derived instruction from men, from business and from things. It is by traversing the globe, imperfect as is its present condition, that we refine our ideas, that we acquire philosophical tranquillity and the complete use of our rational faculties. Above all, we are impressed with a conviction of human imbecility, and become indulgent and candid.

Bremus has saved from the general shipwreck of good manners, the frankness of an ancient cavalier,

cavalier, and, though the present age and the court of Versailles do not admit of its existing in all its purity, he has at least exhibited traces of it that have excited a mingled sentiment of admiration and regret. His exterior is phlegmatic and obtuse; but familiarise yourself with him, and you will perceive, that these appearances are created by the reserve of a man that is not anxious to display himself.

Though he has lived at a period, when the great publicly exposed to sale a credit that they did not possess; when they sought by every mode of adventure a wealth after which they were ever grasping, but which they could never retain; when they permitted to themselves expedients at which delicacy shudders; he exhibited a mind, disinterested, generous, and superior to the frigid counsels of arithmetical calculation.

In the national assembly his mere opinion is of some consequence. I know not whether to the merit of judicious discernment he will unite the talents of eloquence and rhetorical energy; but I know, that he will never be thought lightly of by the party to which he shall be attached, and that they will place in his words and his actions the most entire confidence. Does this eulogium appear trivial and common? Why is it, that the word *confidence* should, when applied to many people, be the bitterest sarcasm you can utter? Why should it draw a thunder of disapprobation upon the intrepid flatterer, that should venture to employ it towards the half of those who breathe or might breathe the air of a court? Is it, that we have at length
joined

joined to our other good qualities an utter contempt of propriety and decorum?

If I have here insisted upon no particular defect, it is not that the character of Bremus is perfect; but that his defects produce little injury, and are not the source of any malignant influence. When we are endowed with certain qualities, they spread over us a lustre, that enables petty spots to pass unperceived.

M A Z E A S.

(*Duke de Coigny.*)

IT is not impossible to unite moderate self-love with all the fury of aristocratical zeal; to submit with resignation to the economy of reform, and to nourish at the same time the most violent hatred against the individual, who has dared to violate what we have been used to regard as our property. And why not our property? Where is the bounty, that the receiver has not taken, as if it were a compensation scarcely equal to his services and his merits?

Mazeas is the chief of a house in which royal favour has been hereditary. Of course he has done more for his country, than if he had conquered provinces, or shielded her capital from destruction. Where are the benefits and graces

that can ever repay the extraordinary merits of Mazeas?

Alas, Mazeas ! it is not capacity, that is the means of success ; it is gentleness, sincerity and moderate assiduity. I say moderate ; for overbearing pretensions, presumptuous arrogance, and insolent importunity, are displeasing even to courts where they were first produced.

Mazeas was not forgotten in the late abolitions ; but then he dared to recommend them. He advanced with a satisfied air to the altar upon which he was to be sacrificed, and probably consoled himself for the misfortune of suffering under the economical scissars of the minister he detested, by ridiculing the paucity and sterility of his resources.

In the National Assembly he has maintained a modest and crafty silence ; for, observe, in a courtier modesty and craftiness are convertible terms. To risk an opinion is dangerous ; it exposes you to correction ; and accordingly Mazeas has suffered us, to declare the rights of men, to draw the outlines of a constitution, and to enter upon the discussions of the finances, without giving himself the smallest trouble about them.

There is no country but France, where a man imagines, that he is always fit for the place to which he may be nominated. It is absurd to suffer oneself to be appointed the member of an assembly, that demands from us all sorts of information, while we possess nothing but all sorts of presumption.

It has been the part of Mazeas uniformly to maintain the air of a great lord and a courtier. Exterior splendour long kept the vulgar in awe ;

accustomed to respect, they dared not narrowly examine, still less dared they proceed to the incredible extremities, which in our days have thrown down all the barriers of social order.

I conclude with condoling the misfortunes of the great. They are no longer any thing, when we withdraw from them the support of opinion. Rooted prejudice placed them in an elevated point of view; deserted, or deprived of their pedestal, we shall see them with all that ignorance, weakness and inanity, in which they had formerly the absurd candour to exult.

T H R A S E A S.

(*Marquis Ducrest, Brother to the Countess de Genlis, and late Chancellor and Keeper of the Seals to the Duke d' Orleans.*)

I Could never properly discover what Thraseas did with his office; but I am sufficiently aware, that it was office that gave to Thraseas his consequence. When a man is really possessed of some ability, how comes it, that his ceasing to be in a certain position reduces him to nonentity? To be dismissed deprives one indeed of the power of succouring individuals,
but

but it gives us leisure to speculate for the public felicity.

Thraseas's forte was to know how to make use of the talents of others; he caught their ideas and speculations, and he gave a certain smoothness to his way of repeating them, which frequently saved to the great the trouble of entering into details. It is in France only, that men of business exert themselves to speak with grace upon the driest subjects. The secret is, to express oneself with hesitation and uncertainty, and thus to give to the great man the air of having an opinion of his own, while he in reality adopts that of his dependent.

A trivial success in an office, where order is more essential than genius, legitimates in the eyes of ambition every sort of visionary project. Thraseas aspired to the office of controller-general of the finances. Upon what did he found his presumptuous hope? I cannot tell. He seems to have believed, that to arrive at the office was enough, and that the capacity which enabled a man to gain it, would enable him to fill it with credit and propriety.

What then is the sort of ability, which a man thus expects to make the engine of his fortune, his glory and his happiness? It consists in a kind of quickness that enables him readily to discern distant objects, and in a fluency of expression that one acquires by frequently treating upon the same subjects. Such is the sum of the talents of Thraseas. But how many men partake in these feeble advantages? It is the arrogant man only that sets a value upon them; the man of true ability estimates them at their proper rate. Thraseas expected to

to make of them the instruments of his elevation; they were the means of his fall. Since that time he has written books that nobody reads, digested projects that nobody approves, and offered proposals that nobody accepts.

Had he known what belonged to the character of the National Assembly, he would have been as anxious to escape the being elected, as he actually was to procure it. What can induce a man to desire a conspicuous situation, when the more he is known the less he is esteemed? It is doubtless of little consequence to want the splendid talent of eloquence, which contributes more to the reputation of the possessor than to the public welfare; but a man must, in that case, supply in the soundness of his understanding, in the accuracy of his judgment, and the vigour of his reflections, what he wants in animation, invention and celerity.

When one example of extraordinary success has occurred in a family, the rest think themselves obliged to do honour to their blood by the adventurousness of their undertakings. They assume a boldness, that sets difficulty at defiance. If they cannot equal the talents, they can at least appropriate the enterprises of others; and this presumption, joined with a little specious ability, wins upon the good-will of mankind, steals away their esteem, and is frequently crowned with patronage and success. On the other hand, the ingenuous man, who persuades himself that modesty is the signature of merit, believes, that sooner or later his worth will be understood, and scarcely consents to receive the homage that is paid him.

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There is a species of mediocrity, that pleases, that even deludes ; we never judge it severely, till it is called into action. In vain we are warned to distrust it ; experience, and nothing but experience, can undeceive us. How many people had faith in the ability of Duval before his adventure ? and what an impotent conclusion ! In the room of a statesman we saw a tale-bearer ; his place and his power were altogether unequal, and he was speedily annihilated. Many people will tell you, that Duval is a page to be whipped, and Thraseas a prince to be soothed into right thinking.

We have little harm to say of Thraseas. His error is not the misusing the bounties of nature, but the setting her arrangements at defiance. Nature has given to each of us his part, and it is that part we are to act. But, if we listen to the whispers of ambition, we incessantly overstep the limit that is prescribed us, and the consequence is irremediable confusion.

M O N T E S E.

(Marquis de Montesquieu, one of the Forty Members of the French Academy.)

MONTÉSE resolved to rise in the world, and he has risen. He had no one circumstance
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in his favour but ability ; and with that ability, he has supplied all that he wanted. He has purified the obscure stream of his ancestry ; he has gained that which gives to a family eclat, an immense fortune ; he has filled considerable offices ; he has concluded by gaining a seat in the Academy, where those, who are fatigued by the pursuits of ambition, do not ordinarily repose themselves. There is no engine that Montese did not employ ; the great, for whom he had no esteem ; the gaming table, for which he had no propensity ; the sex, whom he always distrusted ; business, which he always hated ; and thus, in fine, he has seized by violence upon the favours of fortune.

Montese did not stop here. Having gained the ends he had originally in view, he next set himself to consign to oblivion the thousand little manœuvres by which he had risen ; manœuvres, not absolutely reprehensible, but not perfectly regular. Examples palliates, but does not excuse him. In the moment that we are engaged in all the eagerness of pursuit, we easily justify ourselves the conduct, the memory of which we promise ourselves to obliterate, when leisure shall serve us to be delicate, scrupulous and severe.

At a period when every one imagined it his duty to communicate his sentiments to the public, Montese took up the pen, and in a small essay full of precision, delivered excellent principles, and entered his claim to the appellation of a citizen. Since the meeting of the assembly, he has not affected to seize at every moment upon the tribunal of harangues, but what he has said has been so judiciously timed, that
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five or six short speeches have done as much for him in the public opinion, as all the numerous and long-winded orations which a dozen honourable members have so prodigally lavished. Montese is sarcastic, without possessing the talent of raillery. He is something like that sort of people, who destroy every thing and build nothing. It has been said, that a reputation thus gained, is gained at the least expence in the world. But there is a mistake, that lies at the foundation of this silly proverb, which we hear so repeatedly from the mouths of men who have nothing of their own. Without doubt it is easy to calumniate, to scandalize, to misinterpret and to distort ; but all this does not amount to what we call sarcasm.

Upon this occasion it becomes us to recollect what a magistrate said to the assembly of his colleagues : “ Far from us those transient
 “ sallies, those sudden starts, those brilliant
 “ mistakes, which spring up in a mind intoxicated with vanity, or dazzled by the singularity of its conceptions ! Let us take experience for our guide ! She will teach us,
 “ that in important and difficult affairs, where
 “ all is uncertainty and darkness, illumination
 “ can be obtained only by the effort of many
 “ intellects, placed with respect to each other
 “ so as mutually to co-operate and not to confound. But this can never take place, unless the hearts of men are in concert. In a
 “ question of great public good, in the establishment of a wise regulation, can each individual have his share of glory ? without
 “ doubt. But we must proceed, as we would
 “ in the erection of a public building ; every
 “ man

“ man must labour in concert with every other,
“ without capriciously starting away from the
“ plan that has been suggested and the means
“ that have been thought proper.”

S T A N I S B A Y.

(*Count d'Estaing.*)

STANISBAY offers to us much matter for meditation, and of all the portraits in this Gallery it is his, before which you ought to stop the longest; not because it is more interesting, not because it is painted with more mastery or is a more striking likeness, but because it exhibits a sort of contrast, that ought to astonish the human mind, and will instruct those who read with a particular purpose.

Stanisbay, with the appearance of a friend to the people, is furious in his zeal for aristocracy; with the appearance of frankness and sincerity, is the craftiest and most subtle of courtiers. People think him full of information, and he is merely presumptuous; he acts without a plan, or he forms his plan without data. Of all the men who have usurped a reputation, he is the individual who has the fewest pretences to support it.

He

He was still young, when he affected an utter indifference to the advantage of bearing a respectable and unspotted name. He was seen at the theatres in the plainest attire, mixing in the tumultuous crowd, listening to the remarks, enforcing the equality of mankind, inveighing against the quackery of rank, attacking the luxury of the great, and boasting of the ancient simplicity as the greatest of all advantages.

When he entered into the service of the marine, he had reached the thirty-fifth year of his age. He determined not be dispensed from the lowest rank of service; and putting himself at the head of a corps of an hundred boys, made his entrée at the port of Brest. This affectation was of service to him. People conceived I know not what of heroical, at seeing a mature Tyro confound himself with a set of youths, destined to the service of their country.

Stanisbay displayed suppleness at court and audacity in the field. He courted his superiors, and was inflexibly firm towards those who were bound to obey him. These two qualities caused him to be chosen for the command of the Antilles. In this situation he formed himself upon the tyrannical maxims which were then respected, but are now universally exploded. The people submitted to his sway, but champed in secret the bit of authority.

Their complaints grew, they spread over the islands, they traversed the seas, they arrived at the metropolis and the court. The islanders raised the fatal standard at his door, and thus fixed upon him the stamp of proscription. He received it in silence. Eighteen months acquired for him the abhorrence of the people,
and

and threatened him with the vengeance of the court. Eighteen months were still to elapse before he was to return home to give an account of his conduct. He employed them in recovering the good will of the people he had offended. His haughtiness grew tame, he submitted himself to the empire of law, he was eager in enquiring out and relieving the wants of the multitude; and this victim of public hatred inspired attachment and regret, saw the inhabitants repent of their opposition, and weep for the moment that was to deprive them of his government.

Fortune attended upon him in the American war. It was there that he substituted temerity in the room of science, and conceived the design of compelling Europe to acknowledge his talents. He pushed severity till it became beneficence; he extended courage to the extremity of hardihood; there was no daring at which he hesitated, there was no success that he did not obtain; for his audacity convinced and excited the admiration of the multitude.

A few splendid actions productive of no benefit, a proper dose of presumption, a portion of singularity, a portion of brutality, contributed to make him pass for a considerable man. Sometimes he was talked of for the administration at home, sometimes for the government of the seas. He obtained neither the one nor the other. A penetrating statesman, who understood his character, kept him at a judicious distance from public affairs. But five years of ministerial interregnum have since occurred, and he has turned the courtier, not of any royal personage, but of those who are supposed to have access to royalty.

He

He gained the command of a troop recently instituted, and has found in a plebeian proceeding the method of rendering himself the man of the king. Stanishay, be an avowed royalist; and be not suspected at once of imbecility and treachery!

Slender ability is not the great inconvenience; in affairs of administration men do well enough with it; but instability and inconstancy must sooner or later ruin any administration. It is with Stanishay, as with people of his cast in general; take from them the splendour of birth, the influence that arises from wealth, the dignity that is supposed to be attached to considerable appointments, and you leave absolutely nothing.

One of the great defects of Stanishay is to be totally destitute of prescience; he is the slave of events, because he knows not how to conduct them. If we judged of certain men by the insatiable perseverance with which they aspire to office, we should swear, that they were eaten up by the zeal of patriotism, and devoured with the restless desire of serving their fellow creatures.

H I L A S.

*(Count de Lalli Tollendal *.)*

HILAS never suspected that he was an orator. His friends assured him that he possessed the advantages of genius and eloquence; he answered them with a stare of astonishment and a smile of contempt. They were not discouraged, they swore that it was even so; they convinced him; and from that moment he has been an indefatigable and an everlasting declaimer. His head full of passages from the tragic poets, he gave to his speeches a certain exuberance that was mistaken for energy. But the circle of his invention was soon exhausted, and the difference was presently conspicuous between brilliancy of memory and effervescence of soul, between love of applause and love of one's country.

Hilas never dug in the mine of system, never penetrated to the true hinge of a question; never urged an argument in its utmost extent, or analysed it in its remoter consequences. His heat is a heat of the brain; an event calls it forth; language suggests itself in abundance; meaning is lost in the multitude of his remarks. You think he has spoken with great propriety, but you are unable to recollect what he has alledged. His auditors are disposed to yield to his allegations; a temporary fit of candour suggests itself,

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and

and he acknowledges that he is misleading the assembly. From that moment the sport of opinion, he vibrates from side to side, and impresses no sentiment, but that of pity in those that know him, and that of shame in those that were idle enough to esteem him.

The sex conspired to give reputation to Hilas. For himself, he was glad to have reputation, let it come from what quarter it might. He determined to appear in public, and fame came to meet him. Those persons in particular who had not heard his tragedy, had a favourable opinion of it.

The national assembly has annihilated the phantom. There he was presently judged to be the echo of those who were not fond of noise; the paraphrast of men, who were indolent and modest, and who set no value on the transient murmur of applause.

The man, who said, *we are, what we chuse to make ourselves*, asserted an unquestionable truth. Hilas dreamed that he was a poet; and immediately wrote a colloquy of fifteen hundred verses, destined, not for the theatre, but for the circle of his admirers.

There are men, who honestly believe, that a vast deal of genius is necessary in order to produce a bad tragedy. What, must a man be in possession of talents to enable him to spoil what other men have said, and to repeat in a new form what has been better expressed a thousand times before? The same argument, that should prove that a good tragedy is the first production of the human mind, will equally prove that a bad one is altogether contemptible. There is an obvious reason why it is intitled to neither
quarter

quarter nor encouragement, and that is, that to compose this supposed excellent production, is a thing to which we are in no sort obliged.

Hilas has often made me reflect how prodigal Paris is of its applause, with how much facility it conjures up talents, and then bestows them at will upon its momentary favourites. He is unquestionably a man of capacity. But shall we never distinguish between capacity and genius? shall we never discern the shades, that divide the man of information from the man of invention, and the respectable citizen from the elevated statesman?

The statesman comprehends all the defects of our social existence, discerns the degree of improvement of which we are susceptible, calculates the advantages that result from the specious possession of liberty, estimates the danger of confusion and tumult, studies the art of preparing men for felicity, and conducts them towards perfection by the plainest paths. His survey extends beyond ordinary limits; he examines climates; he deliberates on circumstances; he yields to events without suffering them to master him, if at any time he is unable to conduct them. If I compare Hilas with this sketch, weak, desultory and imperfect as it is, he shrinks into nothing, and we see him a man that declaims in pompous and lofty phraseology, the noisy explosion of a half-formed talent. What do we conclude from the portrait of Hilas? Nothing to his own disadvantage, every thing to the disadvantage of his patrons and his promoters. Let the state put into his hands the arms of a soldier; let the muse adorn his forehead with her choicest laurels; but let the nation in-

trust

trust her interests to the sagacity of experience ;
let our laws be engendered in the depth of meditation, and not spring from an heated and fiery imagination !

Perhaps I shall be thought severe upon the character of Hilar. Far from me the desire to lessen him ; but I have spoken the truth in this place, that I might gain credit in treating of more important personages. The elegant, but feeble Pavillon has observed :

The man whose tongue is lavish in applause,
Ruins his own, nor aids his neighbour's cause*.

** Celui qui, sans discernement,
Adresse à tous venans les louanges qu'il donne,
Fait grand tort à son jugement,
Et ne fait bonneur à personne.*

R A M B I N E L L I.

R A M B I N E L L I.

(Viscount de Mirabeau.)

OF his own accord he would never have thought of giving weight and consequence to his opinions ; but he had the glory of a father to support, and the reputation of a brother to balance. He did not recollect, that in this instance nature had done what society does, and portioned in a very different manner the younger brother and the heir.

Rambinelli was hastening to forget his speculations, and to wait the progress of events in the solitude of retreat, when a bailliage stopped him upon his route, obliged him to travel the same road again, and to go to defend their interests in the national assembly. He accepted the advantage, that accrued from the homage paid to his name.

His favourite objects are his title and his sword. Noble he was born, and noble he determines to remain. He will resign his pensions, he is willing to hazard his life in the field of battle ; but you must never speak to him of the equality of mankind. If Iramba had adhered to the aristocracy, perhaps Rambinelli would have been more docile upon the article of liberty.

Rambinelli has certainly a degree of smartness ; to subjects the most serious he gives an air of gaiety ; but then he chuses ill his time and place, and is answered, instead of applause, with severe rebuke and pointed sarcasm.

Mr. Cerutti wrote five and twenty years ago to a Frenchman : “ *Badinage* [agreeable trifling] is, with a few exceptions, the leading character of your nation. You trifle in the cabinet ; you trifle at the head of our armies ; *badinage* asserts its place indiscriminately in all your conversations. I have even known preachers that had skill enough to find room for it in their sermons.”

The times are so greatly changed, that what was then imputed justly or unjustly to the French character, is at present applicable only to a small number of men, such as Raminelli, who have kept themselves out of the vortex and rage of politics. And yet we ought perhaps to prefer such men as Raminelli to the persons elsewhere described by Mr. Cerutti. “ Happy because they have sensibility, they are rendered miserable by the play of their imagination : they walk over rose-leaves and are in pain, they feel nothing but the thorns. Disheartened by the most trivial disappointments, the veriest pebble that falls upon them is in their sense like the crush of mount Ossa.”

Certain characters have in them a violence, that is mistaken for energy, but is much nearer a-kin to feebleness. True vigour exerts itself in act ; violence hinders us from acting. Vigour is the concentration of all our powers ; violence does not allow us to employ any one of them to advantage. Vigour aims a blow, and strikes just where it intends ; violence does not see the object it encounters. Why is it, that in drawing a portrait, ideas come into my mind that have nothing to do with the object with which I am engaged ?

MINCIUS.

M I N C I U S.

(*Mr. Mounier**.)

WHEN a man is in the habit of thinking nothing but what others have thought before him, when he has drawn his principles, not from a comparison of facts, but from books, he soon ceases to be equal to the events that daily occur. For want of books, which he has no longer time to consult, he draws his information from the remarks of debaters, and forms, from a mass of reflections that are struck out by opposition, or that escape in the vehemence of declamation, a kind of whole that is thought novel. The vulgar infallibly mistake a mere chain of memories artfully connected for a judicious and digested performance.

Such is the history of Mincius, such are his works, such is his constitution.

When we do not possess the gifts of perspicuity and penetration, we state our questions improperly, we excite a doubt at the very moment that we offer a proposition! If the want of clearness in our proposition be accompanied with that slowness of conception, that inspires the orator with doubt and hesitation, and makes him return again and again to illustrate his meaning, the necessary consequence is obscurity of manner and unintelligibleness of diction. The

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auditors are disgusted, because they are puzzled; they are impatient, because they find that the mistakes of the orator have a tendency to involve them in similar mistakes. Hence the murmurs of disapprobation that are frequently heard in a numerous assembly.

Such was the presidency of Mincius; such is the unfortunate consequence of accepting a burthen, to which our strength is unequal.

When, in addition to the inconvenience of a cloudy understanding, we represent to ourselves a figure destitute of expression, a voice without harmony, and a left-handed, ungraceful elocution, we must feel, that it is impossible for a person thus qualified, to curb the imaginations of an assembly, ever ready to wander into what is unbecoming, or into what is digressive. Not succeeding by gentle means, he wishes to display authority, and displays nothing but peevishness. To utter our commands with state, and not to be obeyed, must ever excite ridicule; and the multitude, that yield so readily to the empire of genius and the dictation of talent, spurn at the presumption of mediocrity, and avenge themselves of the man who is unable to restrain them.

Such was the spectacle that Mincius exhibited, when he seated himself in a chair, that five or six different persons have occupied, and that only one person ever filled.

Mincius soured an eagle in his own province, and was the supposed author of a revolution, that never existed. His genius is exactly like that of a man, who should discover the precise proportion that the number sixteen bears to eight *plus* eight. Accordingly, for twelve months he
was

was thought a prodigy. The case is now altered ; the nation protests against every sort of division, of proportion, of distinction of orders, I desire but one argument to prove, that a distinction of orders is totally inadmissible ; and I would draw that argument merely from the disposition of the hall of assembly, and the mode of taking votes by the *ayes* standing up and the *noes* remaining seated. There are a multitude of questions, in which the clergy do not interest themselves, to which they afford no attention ; they do not so much as think of standing up, and their sitting still decides upon the point. Shall I be told, that every member of the national representation takes an equal interest in the affairs of the public ? I will not trouble myself to refute this allegation, till my adversaries have first proved that a hundred and fifty priests of as many country parishes have the dispositions of statesmen.

More than one of my readers will conclude, that I regard Mincius as merely a common man. No such thing ; I would only have it recollected, according to the well known maxim, “ that the man, who shines in the second rank, is lost if you raise him to the first *, ” and that the unreflecting partialities of the public are continually leading to this injurious error. Recollect for example, what are the qualifications necessary in a president of the national assembly, and you will easily perceive, whether nature, always avaricious of combining great talents with elevated feelings, is likely to be complaisant enough to produce forty extraor-

* *Tel brille au second rang, qui s' eclipse au premier.*

dinary characters, because we have thought proper to adopt regulations, the execution of which demands in the course of one session forty presidents ?

This eminent situation demands a perfect knowledge of the history and progress of opinions ; the happy art of restraining, without offending or fettering the mind ; of influencing by the voice of reason and order, and not by the caprice of the individual ; of rarely delivering one's own sentiments, because they ought never to be delivered in vain. It demands a character for talents, so well established, that every member shall derive confidence from it, and remain convinced, that, if his motion be erroneous, its mistakes will be detected by the person, who has been appointed to watch over the opinions of the rest ; a certain oratorical talent, that enlightens, that inclines, that persuades, and that corrects ; for this talent is now the only instrument of despotism that is permitted a man to employ ; a coolness and self command, that are unapproachable to human passions and infirmity, that are equally deaf to flattery and to satire, that are unprovoked at mental weakness and undazzled with the splendour of genius, that see the brewing storm with an unaltered eye, and that count his personal dangers for nothing in the midst of the crisis of the public.

Can we flatter ourselves that we can find many persons that will answer this description ? and yet men canvass for the office, or at least accept it, with a confidence, that is almost never justified in the experiment.

After what we have said, it is impossible to add another word upon the subject of Mincius.

NAUSICRATES.

N A U S I C R A T E S.

(Mr. le Chapelier.)

PRINCIPLES sound and respectable, a sincere love of virtue, and talents beyond the common rate, have in two months obtained for Nausicrates a considerable reputation. He did not know with what facility men take back what they have lavishly bestowed; how readily they conceive veneration and applause, and how still more readily they revolt again the idol they had just created. In the present instance the public has not reclaimed the praises it bestowed on Nausicrates for facility of apprehension; but it has dared to contradict itself with regard to the firmness it ascribed to him, and it resolved to seek elsewhere for the unalterable resolution, that characterises a Breton, who is devoted to his country and possessed of economical and political science.

But, because there is one quality of which a man is destitute, shall we therefore forget the important advantages of eloquence and of zeal? I do not add of patriotism, for it is doubtful whether that quality exists, or can exist. The love of our country implies that we have a country; and we have nothing that answers to that name. There is not an individual that has any motive to attach him to France; to France, that has so long been forced to oppress her inhabitants with an accumulation of taxes. But this

this apathy, so reasonable in the eyes of the philosopher, may appear dangerous in those of the vulgar. I return to Nausicrates, whose ruling trait seems to be moderation, a virtue, misunderstood in times of disorder, but which is greatly beneficial to mankind.

Without it there would be neither truce, nor negociation, nor unanimity. It dictates to mankind the principles of calculation, and thus triumphs over their stormy passions. In all the affairs of the world there is nothing to which calculation will not apply; and, if ever mankind assume it as the basis of their proceedings, they will then only attain the poor shred of felicity, of which human nature seems to be susceptible. Nausicrates, a stranger to the splendour of courts, to the arts of accomplished flattery, and to the tumults of a numerous assembly, was neither dazzled with the first, seduced by the second, nor intimidated by the third. This firmness is a characteristic of an excellent understanding; the deceptions, that by such means are continually imposed, are so powerful, that perhaps we ought to feel nothing but compassion for the man that is misled by them.

In the elections the baillages sought after those characters that general good fame recommended to them, and the man had accomplished no trivial object, who was favoured with one blast of her trumpet, at the moment that a thousand individuals bribed her to repeat their names.

Nausicrates knows the Spirit of Laws by heart. It is to no purpose that this book has of late years sunk in reputation. No man can read it with impunity, to whom nature has given
that

that temper of mind, that enables him to succeed in the study of government ; he either becomes a submissive scholar, or a disaffected economist. On the former supposition he penetrates himself with the system of Montesquieu, that he may the better support it ; on the latter he penetrates himself still more with it, that he may overthrow it ; on both he grows wiser and more informed. Happy the man, that, like Nausicrates, never knew a half-formed inclination, and an irresolute propensity ! In the judgment of the superficial it will be thought a sort of contradiction, that a man should have energy of understanding without courage of soul ; that he should set refutation at defiance, and be afraid of power ; and that opinion, which rules the despot on his throne, should be a malignant deity, from whose fascinating glance the number is truly small that ever free themselves. Her ascendant is by so much the more imperious, as the apparent evil of shaking it off is not less than the evil of submitting to it.

We have treated at some length of the good qualities of Nausicrates. How agreeable is the office of bestowing our applause ! Naturally we feel ourselves disposed to view every thing on the favourable side ; and, when we employ a different language, it is because we dare not lie to the people of France, and are unwilling to prolong their errors.

M E N O X E S.

(Mr. Cazalès.)

FLUENCY of expression is a quality that we ought not to despise, when it is our business to speak before the public; but, if we be prodigal in the use of it, our auditors become tired, and men listen no longer to him who abuses his prerogative. Thus it was that I reasoned a week ago, in the midst of an harangue of Menoxes, whose harsh and powerful voice, whose disagreeable accent, and whose inarticulate pronunciation are already become tiresome to every one that hears him.

In a numerous assembly, where so many persons have a right to speak, and are anxious to be heard, every member ought to interdict to himself the use of voluminous periods and brilliant declamation. Away with exordium, away with peroration; all we want is the fact, the opinion and the consequence. There is scarcely an observation that you cannot comprize in ten lines, and brevity has a thousand advantages; it is heard, it is remembered, it convinces. But there is need of a strong understanding to resist the occasion of displaying oneself and of shining.

A long discourse necessarily leaves room for objections; the love of admiration leads us to attack the weak side of our neighbours. What then must become of the everlasting motions of Menoxes? What ought to be the fate of that arrogant presumption,

presumption, which of a sudden turns a voter into a dogmatist? Is it impossible to learn that principle of taste, which is the genuine criterion of talent*?

It must not be pretended that zeal is an excuse for every thing;—that is not what I meant to say; it excuses the individual, but not his errors. Let us come to an amicable explanation with Menoxes, and intrust him with the secret of what two thousand spectators think of him. In what I have hitherto said I have been vindicating him; and, if I have touched the features with a flying pencil, it is, that the esteem one entertains for honest intentions, inspires moderation, kindness and indulgence.

It has been imputed to Menoxes, with some foundation, that he is continually endeavouring to catch at the loose propositions which are hinted at in the course of debate, in order to cavil and to shine. What then, is there nothing more worthy our pursuit, than the art of speaking with brilliancy and applause? Ought we to recollect the existence of so petty an object, when we might be engaged in teaching mankind, to live like brethren under the guardianship of law? This passion for chicanery is destructive of harmony, and continually impedes the course of affairs. Let us forget the folly of rivalry, and “let us show ourselves

* “Taste is a quality, that men of narrow comprehension take it for granted they possess, that the true critic regards as a creature of the imagination, that all the world talks about, that few understand, and that, by being often defined, is become nearly incapable of definition.” *This note is in the original work.*

“ animated with the zeal that distinguished the
 “ ancient Romans. They contributed all that
 “ individuals could spare to the public treasury.
 “ In the same manner men of sound informa-
 “ tion ought to contribute, without reserve,
 “ without arrogance and without disguise, the
 “ information they possess to the public coun-
 “ sels, the common stock of the assembly of
 “ which they are members. Such were our
 “ predecessors, such is still the spirit of those
 “ corps, that have preserved the noble frank-
 “ ness and simplicity of our ancient manners.
 “ It is upon these pure and unalterable maxims
 “ that the glory of our national institutions has
 “ been built. Far from us those transient sal-
 “ lies, those sudden starts, those brilliant mis-
 “ takes, which spring up in a mind intoxicated
 “ with vanity, or dazzled by the singularity of
 “ its conceptions ! Let us take experience for
 “ our guide ! She will teach us, that, in im-
 “ portant and difficult affairs, where all is un-
 “ certainty and darkness, illumination can be
 “ obtained only by the effort of many intellects,
 “ placed with respect to each other so as mu-
 “ tually to co-operate and not to confound.
 “ But this can never take place, unless the
 “ hearts of men are in concert. In a question
 “ of great public good, in the establishment of
 “ a wise regulation, can each individual have
 “ his share of glory ? without doubt. But we
 “ must proceed, as we would in the erection
 “ of a public building ; every man must labour
 “ in concert with every other, without capri-
 “ ciously starting away from the plan that has
 “ been

“ been suggested and the means that have been
“ thought proper*.”

* This passage appears to be extracted from the speech of a magistrate in one of the parliaments; the latter half of it has already been quoted in the character of Montese; the former half seems very irrelevant to the object of this publication.

NEBOSIS.

N E B O S I S.

(Mr. Demeunier.)

NEBOSIS has received a present from nature, of which he makes considerable advantage. It is a voice harmonious, clear and strong, and a smooth and flowing enunciation, that carries whatever he utters directly to the heart. To this delightful faculty he unites that extreme clearness of apprehension, with which it associates so happily and so well. Nebosis has also a degree of self-importance, a spice of obstinacy, and those little symptoms of vanity, which are so much alive to every species of offence. But in us such trivial imperfections shall never find a censor. We are unfortunately but too often called upon to the description of vices, or of defects so material, that they produce all the consequences of vice.

Nebosis will scarcely suggest any new expedients; but he will display the utility of those that are suggested. He will scarcely brave the tumultuous rage of expiring abuse; but he will foresee and weaken its efforts. He will scarcely launch the thunder of justice; but he will show the dreadful consequences of corruption. He will scarcely be at great expence in seeking the remedy; but he will recommend in the most insinuating terms the remedies that have been discovered.

Such is the utility of numerous assemblies; they contain within themselves abilities of every
different

different stamp and talents for every use. What is overlooked by one man is collected by another, and the result of the whole is inestimable in value. The passions indeed disturb for a moment their tranquility and harmony, but reason speedily brings back the desired calm and the salutary equilibrium of opinion.

In such an assembly there are minds of energy, that dispose almost at pleasure of the inclinations of the multitude; there are tenacious spirits, that are for ever attached to the pedestal of truth; there are sons of violence, who outrun their object, and whose efforts are misapplied and unfruitful; there are rich men, prompt to be offended with whatever shocks their prejudices; there are humourists, who never reach their point without seeming to go in the opposite direction; there are extemporary characters, of whom the first start is all that is valuable; there are obscure speakers, whom you must always study at the risk of never comprehending them; there are intellectual despots, who would think themselves disgraced, if they undertook to prove their opinion. It is from this mixture, good and bad, that springs the general advantage.

The talents of Nebosis are not such as to satisfy a capacious ambition, but they might well content a reasonable self-love, if by the way self-love were ever reasonable. He estimates his lot at its true value, and is contented with it; and this is his best eulogium.

An Italian author has observed, that in every block of marble there is a fine statue, but the difficulty is to get it out. One might apply this idea to every man delegated by his fellow-citizens

citizens to watch over their interests. The qualities were undoubtedly real that determined their choice; the business is to bring out and display them.

I consider it as no merit in a man to have a pleasing physiognomy; but I consider it as a fair subject of compliment. It determines that first disposition, that renders a man accessible to those who are worth his knowledge. A friendship of ten years may possibly have blinded me to the defects of Nebosis; should that be the case, it is of all mistakes the most venial.

POSIN.

P O S I N.

(Mr. Pison du Galand.)

THERE are defects of character that are more injurious than vices. For example : a man, who never knows what he is doing, seldom what he is saying, and hardly what he would be at, could certainly be charged with nothing more than imperfection or absurdity ; and yet he would do more harm, or at best be more useless to his country, than the man, whose principles were suspicious, or whose heart was open to the seductions of depravity. Whoever knows Posing will easily make the application of my doctrine. Meanwhile, by one of those contradictions, of which the human mind furnishes so many examples, this man has a certain facility in anatomising an argument, in abridging a motion, in selecting from the rest whatever is essential, that implies an extraordinary talent of method and perspicuity. He throws light upon the obscurest questions, and passes with the utmost ease through all the windings of a metaphysical labyrinth.

It is not uncommon to find men brilliant and fertile, acute and agreeable, profound and laborious ; but it is a miracle to encounter these qualities united with quickness of apprehension and soundness of judgment. A quick apprehension in the speaker dispenses his hearers, if I may be allowed the expression, from reflection and study. All we have to exert is the pleasant
feeling

feeling of approbation, or the involuntary act of rejecting what displeases us. But these operations are rendered in the highest degree complex, when the orator is confused and immethodical; he embarrasses and wearies the attention instead of occupying it.

Posin was extremely at a loss for a method of distinguishing himself from the crowd. He determined to be busy, without knowing well what was to be the result, but satisfied, that mankind feel a certain gratitude to the well-intentioned and officious man, even when he injures instead of serving them, and acts at the risk of producing all sorts of mischief.

Had it not been for the concurrence of circumstances the name of Posin would never have been heard of. The concurrence has happened, and it is but little that we have to say about him.

HUGO.

H U G O.

(Mr. de Gouy d'Arcy.)

THE success of Hugo is uniform, because he has always recourse to petty causes of success. Mankind will for ever be caught with this trick. They will not distrust the man who deals in every thing that is minute; and his progress will be so rapid, that, when their jealousy is awakened, it will be too late to oppose him. The man of magnificent views fixes upon himself the observation of the multitude, and, though he should do nothing, they always believe that he will do a great deal. The man of expedients humbles nobody, and men even pardon him his success, because they can always amuse themselves with laughing at its source.

Spite of the perpetual littleness of Hugo, we cannot justly deny him the credit of considerable science, and the extraordinary talent of turning to his own advantage the fault of another, or of moulding to his desire the inclinations of those with whom he is concerned.

It will be asserted, that all this ability cannot exist but at the expence of sincerity; but this is a mistake. Hugo is frank and candid, even in his importunity; he persecutes, he tires, he wearies, but he succeeds. What man but Hugo, would have surmounted the barriers between the assembly and the colonies? What man, but Hugo, would have been able to introduce the
American

American corn into the Antilles? While men are born to yield to the indiscreet eagerness of solicitation, why should eagerness and solicitation be forbidden? We experience a few rebuffs; but the very men, who have sold their suffrages or their fidelity, conclude with felicitating or esteeming those who extort them.

In countries, where nothing is given but to patronage and partiality, modest merit is sure to be discouraged; officious mediocrity makes its advantage; and for a still stronger reason, zeal effectually improves the circumstances that occur.

Hugo is one of those men that must be always in action. Persons so generously disposed can never remain quiet. We laugh at them indeed, at the same time that we reap the benefit of their indiscreet activity. The proceeding is as unjust as it is common; but it is insufficient to discourage certain officious characters: they have sworn to secure the welfare of the world, and all the obstacles that occur cannot put an end to their heroical undertaking.

For the sake of justice however we are unfortunately obliged to confess, that a talent of this sort can be of no considerable service in an assembly, where the interests of twenty-four millions of men are discussed, and where it is necessary to improve that effervescence of zeal, which may secure to the nation an advance of a hundred years in a single day, which may affect the dispositions and feelings of Europe in general, incapable of being the spectator of such a revolution, without recollecting her own circumstances, and projecting the epoch of her liberty.

Liege

Liege and Hesse Cassel have shown, that the example of France has not been given in vain. There are countries where the renovation of their policy will require a longer preparation than it has with us; but the preparation will only render the conclusion more sure, and perhaps enable them to consummate their deliverance in a shorter time.

Hugo is prompt to diffuse the spirit of alarm*; but the ascendant of the assembly is still such, that Paris, tumultuous as it is, verging as it shows itself towards despotism in the midst of its enthusiasm for liberty, has not yet that confidence in itself, which should encourage it to appeal from the decrees of the representatives of the nation.

Ordinarily speaking, men had rather admire, than peruse with attention. At present they had rather peruse and criticise, than admire. Each man feels himself actuated by something more than severity in the examination of questions, that must form the basis of our future felicity.

A man, like Hugo, will do harm to nobody, and will assist in producing the happiness of many. We are in want of these geniuses, that embrace the cause of the human species. Without them a tranquil egotism would contemplate with supineness the fall of monarchies, would content itself with foretelling calamity without seeking to prevent it. Activity is to beneficence what motion is to the system of the world; the one is the animating soul of society, just as the other is the key, the central spring of the grand machine that we denominate the universe.

* Mr Gouy d' Arcey declared in the national assembly in the month of August, that the bankruptcy of France was nearly inevitable.

C L E O N D A S.

(Mr. Claviere.)

CLEONDAS is full of projects, of speculations, of critical views and plans of reform. No man ever heard him commend; he sometimes tolerates, nay has been known to approve, but for ever alters the suggestions of others, and thinks himself born to improve and to perfect human understanding. He is incapable of execution, but sufficiently useful to remedy, to advise, and to supply what is deficient. He has meditated more than he has written; and it cannot be said of him, as it was of the abbé de Saint Pierre, "that he was a mechanical inventor without understanding the principles of mechanics." Cleondas is perfectly acquainted, if not with our constitution, at least with the administration to which we have owed our existence for twelve hundred years.

Nature has endowed him with a sort of understanding peculiar to himself. Sarcastical in his humour, he constantly gives a dash of of misanthropy to whatever he produces. He connects himself with a kind of journeyman author, just as an usurer connects himself with an active and intelligent merchant. His ideas are good, but it requires some effort to understand them. There is an air of craft in his demeanour, and those

those who are concerned with him, employ themselves more in guessing what he does not tell them, than in attending to what he actually communicates. The man, who openly professes great ingenuity and particular subtlety, can never support his professions, without trenching in some degree upon the principles of good faith and sincerity. The extreme of subtlety borders very near upon artifice, and artifice is separated only by a metaphysical line from falsehood and fraud.

His mind is naturally timid; he apprehends the despotism of men in office, the injurious effects of opinion, and even events of his own creation, and which he encounters only in idea. Hence a sort of discontent and apprehension, that is the death of confidence, and that unstrings the nerves of those, who prefer miscarriage with tranquillity to success that is poisoned with alarms. He is rich, or at least enjoys something more than competence: but in spite of himself the future torments him sufficiently to pollute and destroy the enjoyments of the present moment. The present is at our disposal, and, if such are our dispositions, we may easily render it as unhappy, as if we were really overtaken by a thousand calamities.

Cleondas is without doubt the martyr of an impaired constitution. He gave proofs of his courage, at a time when ministerial despotism punished men even for their thoughts.

The native of a free country, he professes principles, that are deemed visionary by the bigoted and the timid, that are just in the opinion of men of energy and science. They are
drawn

drawn from a rich mine of economical reflections. There is no ostentation in his style, there is no exaggeration in his sentiments ; he proceeds with caution and security in a career, where he has gained reputation to himself, by occasioning truth to be disseminated in the writings of others. The merit of one and another performance, that I could mention, and that bear in their title the name of some well known author, ought in strictness to be ascribed to him. It is well known that he employs under him a journeyman painter, just as a jeweller in the Place Dauphine, has working-jewelers that execute his devices. One might compare him in this respect to Alcibiades, who cut off the tail of a very beautiful dog, that the Athenians might amuse themselves with this folly, and not attend to his projects. Just so Cleondas willingly gives up his journeyman to the sarcasms of criticism, provided we remember the merit that is in the composition and is ascribable to him.

Cleondas is a compound of gaiety and dejection, of ambition and indifference, of severe calculation and disinterested benevolence. Born in a country where the inhabitants amass money as naturally as they breathe the vital air, his preferences are fixed upon glory and reputation, the proper aliment of an ardent spirit, that has been repeatedly worn with disappointment and chagrin, and that is conscious to that destructive jealousy, that views with impatience the successes of another, and recollects itself only to arraign fortune for its disappointments.

If

If Cleondas were to engrave his picture,
he ought to put this couplet at the bottom of
his portrait:

He falls—to rise; he slumbers—to annoy;
Retires to press; and favours—to destroy*.

* *On tombe, on se relève, on terrasse, on détruit,
On recule, on s'avance, on s'arrête, on poursuit.*

H O R T E N S I U S.

(Mr. de Biozat.)

MEN's minds are perhaps as various as their faces. We are sometimes struck at first sight, and sometimes discover by repeated observation a subtle and penetrating expression of feature. This face has regularity, and that has animation. In one physiognomy we discern grace, and in another energy and force. Hortensius exhibits a compound of prudence, dexterity and penetration, that does not permit us to confound him with the class of ordinary minds.

Expect not from him the imperious powers of eloquence, or the finer charms of persuasion. But in lieu of these you will find sound reasoning, clear expression, perspicuous method, and a regular chain of opinions and principles. Perhaps he will never bring you over to his own system by a sort of violence; but, where you agree with him, he will give you confidence in yourself, and you will feel a tranquil satisfaction in entertaining sentiments that are supported by him.

He adopts no opinion without examination; he urges no argument without the sincerest conviction. In vain has nature given him a certain bias towards obstinacy; he opposes this bias with success, wherever the voice of truth is heard. He could not have drawn up so admirable a declaration of the rights of man as that

of

of Scyros *, but he would do better perhaps in giving us no declaration at all; well assured, that those, who form for us a good constitution, will at the same time have determined in the best possible way the rights of man.

Hortensius arrived at Versailles perfectly persuaded that the great appear to the best advantage at a distance. Hortensius will leave Versailles equally persuaded that distance is the light most advantageous for almost all mankind. He had conceived an elevated idea of certain celebrated advocates; he has heard them, and altered his opinion; and has concluded, that the perpetual practice of speaking is itself a talent in the judgment of those, who are attracted by mere fluency.

Simplicity is banished from the tribunal of business, as it had already been from the academies. Homer, Demosthenes and Cicero perhaps preferred it to all the other ornaments of composition; but the taste of the present day is for a mode of expression, that is one half singular and the other obscure; a boyish and mechanical antithesis of words, and a laboriousness of ornament, that produces stiffness, but not beauty. Hortensius claims not, and has no right to claim a share in this sort of merit; he leaves its advocates, to seize upon all the avenues of fame, and to enjoy a reputation, that they have obtained by trick, and not by a fair suffrage.

There is a class of men, who are not sufficiently distinguished in the scale of opinion; it is the class of those, who are useful; their country finds in them a faithful servant, the laws an

* Abbé Siéyes.

advocate, the poor a protector, and the misguided a counsellor and a shepherd. A career so honourable is not attended with glory. Our fellow-creatures have sworn to bestow their esteem upon nothing but the dazzling and the splendid.

We might apply to Hortensius the following verses :

His tongue is still in concert with his heart,
His simplest words an unknown grace impart,
His air, his looks proclaim an honest bent,
And, ere he speaks, we yield our full assent*.

* *Son cœur n' hésite point et vole sur sa bouche,
Chaque réponse est simple et nous charme et nous touche ;
Son maintien, son air seul, peint l'ingénuité ;
Avant qu'il la prononce, il dit la vérité.*

ANACHZES.

A N A C H Z E S.

(Mr. de Volney.)

BLUNTNESS is near akin to probity ; the man of polished manners, till he is known, will not be thought sincere. The urbanity, upon which we pride ourselves, often serves only to conceal our vices : Anachzes has abjured it, and this is perhaps the most brilliant part of his eulogium. His manners are abrupt, his soul is honest, his countenance open, his character marked, his heart susceptible. Oh, nature ! why hast thou not well concluded so fair a beginning ? Why hast thou not added to so many of thy favours, a judgment more sound, and a penetration more accurate ?

Nothing is more obvious and easy, than to run into extremes. We have only to take the opposite party to that, which has been most applauded. Men are astonished, are dissatisfied, contradict us. They enlist on one side or on the other ; the expiring flame of curiosity is roused, and our hearers are induced to alter their opinions. But the benefit of this extreme is not altogether so certain ; the deception is presently over ; men secretly repent of having followed the standards of enthusiasm, and they vent their regret in the mortification of those by whom the standards were erected.

Anachzes proposes a dissolution of the national assembly. How many absurdities are included in this one suggestion ? The gleam of hope

hope that was produced would have been destroyed, the labour of six months annihilated, the projects of the aristocracy revived, the provinces astonished at the destruction of the work they had formed, and our enemies, who watch for the reduction of the greatest monarchy in Europe, gratified and delighted. The man, who is constantly led away by his earliest impulse, must be contented himself to destroy the house of cards he has built, or to see it reprobated and annihilated by others.

The talent of writing books imposes even on those by whom it is exerted : they look with complacency on their own productions. These literary Narcissuses are but ill judges. Anachazes, enchanted with the style of his *Considerations**, did not perceive till too late the absurd policy he was recommending to Europe, while he was talking of the Russians and the Turks. When his *crudities* (ses inconsiderations) were presented to the academy of Saint Petersburg, an unlucky wit observed, that we ought to recommend just such a man to be the ambassador of our rival nation ; and that, if he did but speak as well as he wrote, his arguments would be worth as much to us as an army.

It has been considered as a pleasant spectacle to see a whole nation employed in regulating its own government. And why is this ? Because these regulations, this prerogative, is become the subject of discussion in every street ; because not one of our diurnal writers has dared arm

* On the Present War between Russia and the Porte.

himself with the lash of satire, and endeavoured to silence the political mountebanks, who address themselves to the mob; mountebanks of a new species, who instead of erecting their stage in some public place, go from street to street hawking their nostrums.

This episode has nothing to do with Anachzes. His style, his matter place him beyond the reach of malignity, should it attempt to confound him with the pedagogues of the populace; and, if we have enlarged on the mischiefs of political visionaries, it is merely because there are men who can never resist the potency of words and phrases.

The following lines might properly be applied to the Anachzefes of the national assembly. The fashion of verse is over; but, when verse is made the medium of truth, it may still be allowable occasionally to introduce it.

Oh! Love of country! high, heroic aim!
 By Rome for ever consecrate to fame!
 How shall I speak thee? Virtue's own first-born;
 Or of the wise th' opprobrium and the scorn?
 Is ancient firmness but delirium's rage;
 Or still attends it on the great and sage?
 Why then by multitudes so poorly priz'd?
 Why thus abhorr'd, rejected and despis'd?
 'Tis that, by justice arm'd, by wisdom taught,
 Thou soar'st the noblest reach of human thought:
 But, if thou stoop'st to court an empty name,
 Or lend'st thyself to grace ambition's aim,
 If guilt by thee is hid and traitors sped,
 Hate is thy due, and curses on thy head!
 Thus dost thou seem a lamp that gilds the world,
 Or flame infernal by some demon hurl'd:

A fruitful

A fruitful stream, whose banks are nature's pride,
Or torrent, rolling a destructive tide.

Nor, in her highest and most generous deed,
Is reputation Virtue's constant meed.

The vulgar ne'er explore the patriot's mind,
But call him harsh, unnat'ral and unkind.

See that stern Roman*, whose unalter'd eye
Seems dull, and reckless of his children's cry!

Who but affirms his act was Folly's rage?

Who pours not curses on the boasted sage?

Peace,—nor of human kind the boast reprove!

His act was godlike, and its motive LOVE.

Then, when he view'd their death, nor turn'd his head,

When from his breast each feebler kindness fled,

He felt for Rome, for ages yet unborn,

And bade this Country's love her sons adorn.

* * * * *

Friendship in such a cause must claim no part,

Nor son must shrink to pierce his father's heart,

Our country's love supreme o'er all should reign,

And rival passions view with just disdain.

Kindred, and love, and pity's softest claim,

Must sink abash'd before the patriot's flame;

No tear distains his cheek, he heaves no sighs,

And for his country ev'n exulting dies.

* C. Junius Brutus.

PHOEDOR.

P H O E D O R.

(Mr. Brissot de Warville.)

WE have assigned to Phoedor a place in this Gallery, not in regard to his personal situation, but to what he has written; it was scarcely to have been expected, that an obscure individual, supported by no authority, should have been able to engage the attention of the public.

Phoedor has written much, sometimes upon interesting, always upon useful subjects; and yet, if you subject his works to a critical examination, perhaps you will not find in them six expressions that are new. As to the thoughts, it would be wrong to say any thing; and yet his productions are not mere compilations; but they contain nothing detestable, and nothing excellent. You read them with pleasure, but they add nothing to your stock. Your head is converted for a moment into the bucket of the Danaïdes.

He is a bold writer, but his boldness is unproductive. You acknowledge in him the patriot, the friend of liberty; but he does not animate you sufficiently, to fix your wavering opinion, and induce you to assert by arms the rights of mankind. His plans are accurately formed, but incapable of being executed. He knows the modes of acting of all nations, but he does not know how to employ them. You recognise in his compositions the Germans, the English, the Americans, the French; each

of them separately is well imitated, but they are not blended into one whole.

Phoedor is intitled to our thanks for the pains he has taken to inform his mind. He has passed the seas; he has braved the inclement seasons of the polar circle, and surrendered his liberty, that he might acquire that science that conduces to the improvement of our social life. He has associated with that class of the learned, whose conversation assiduouly, frequented, saves us much solitary study; and whose ideas are easily treasured up in the mind that is careful nothing should be lost. Phoedor seems at more pains to repeat the ideas of his friends, than to cultivate his individual conceptions.

Phoedor has some pretensions to the character of an orator. All the talents, it seems, that we have recognised in Nebosis* were granted him at the expence of Phoedor. We must seek in the pen of the writer the secret of the orator's reputation.

Phoedor is an entire stranger to temperance in his judgments. He praises with violence and excess, or he inveighs in the most outrageous terms; always with a dash of extravagance, or a dash of acrimony. Accordingly his censure afflicts nobody; as to praise, it is sure of being acceptable from whatever quarter it comes.

Far be it from us to censure the honest ambition of being something, at the memorable period, when a nation is breaking its chains! Far from us the spirit of selfishness and indifference; and even in a certain degree the spirit of calculation! But must zeal and patriotism be

* Mr. Demeunier.

in all instances employed in governing the community? In a judicious scale, is there no rank short of that of legislator? Let every one present his doubts, contribute his information, hazard his opinion; but let him not disgrace the leaders by pretending incessantly to instruct them; let him not embarrass the understandings of men by a multiplicity of incompatible proposals. This is to serve his vanity, not to serve his country.

ZOHAMIR.

Z O H A M I R.

(*Mr. de Beaumarchais, Author of Eugenia, the Spanish Barber [Barbier de Seville]; the Marriage of Figaro; the Two Friends, Tarare, and other Performances.*)

TO give a true likeness of Zohamir we must put general opinion altogether out of the question; we must describe a man, who has formed himself upon no model, and will never have an imitator. An incredible union of all sorts of opposites; as vain as if he were a dunce, as much of a cit as if he had never associated with dukes and princesses, combining the puerilities of an author with the best qualities of a statesman, less dextrous than sage, and still more judicious than he is ingenious. It is time we should leave this outline, and descend to minuter particulars.

Zohamir, a man of capacity, has applied that capacity in so many ways, that the vague epithet *capable* seems insufficient to express any thing that belongs to him. An artist, a speculator, a courtier, a man of letters, a merchant, a lawyer, a politician, he has been sufficiently successful to have attracted the public attention in all these characters. He has been accused of enriching himself by all sorts of methods, and of having derived his fame from the Spanish stage, as he derived his fortune from the shores of America. But this is an idle charge.

charge. Were it even true that he borrowed the outline, the finishing is his own; and certainly there is enough in this to ascertain the reality of his capacity. It has been denied, that he drew up his own pleadings in the affair of Goefman. And wherefore denied? Because his subsequent pleadings have had less sprightliness and wit. Sprightliness is a quality, that wears away with our years; the necessity of entering the lists again and again exhausts us; and the enemies, that Zohamir has since had to combat, did not afford so happy topics, as a capricious beauty and a self-created magistrate. Zohamir is not a literati, but the writer of certain agreeable performances; he is not an author, but a man of wit, who scatters his sprightly sallies upon every subject he has to treat. All his productions please. We weep with Eugenia; we laugh with the Barber; we are anxious to unravel the intrigue of Figaro; we admire four scenes of the Two Friends; and, while we indulge a smile at the absurdity of Tarare, we are delighted with the idea that is presented to us in the prologue.

Zohamir, a man of business. It is here that he has shown a true knowledge of things, of countries, and of his fellow-citizens. Nature has given him that intuitive perception, that discovers in a moment the faulty, the weak, and the bright side of whatever proposes itself to him. To this uncommon faculty, this faculty which is always a fortune to the man that possesses it, he unites that unwearied activity, that annihilates obstacles, and electrifies, as it were, the persons employed in executing his designs. But this activity, which in some men is another name for volatility and folly, and in others for
hotheadedness,

hotheadedness, was in him nothing more than the important skill of employing time, time, that is the single riches of a multitude of mankind. To activity and niceness of perception he added method, without which it is impossible truly to succeed, and that scrupulous punctuality to his engagements that grows out of method. A fortune, built upon this foundation, luckily put it in his power to speculate in a larger field. He loved to triumph over minds the most refractory to his schemes, over the impediments that national policy opposed to them, over the men that inspired by jealousy, fettered his march, and excited against him those numerous contentions, in which another man might have despised to engage, but in which he was victorious. The old world and the new were the scene of his conquests. Nor is this expression improper, for it is more difficult for an individual to gain twenty millions*, than for a general to subdue a province. Two observations speak strongly in favour of his ability. First, the choice of his associates, who were at first both his masters, and the masters of those that he has since subjected; and next, the sort of affairs in which he engaged. They were almost always connected with the operations of the state; so that, while he was erecting the edifice of his private fortune, he was often useful to his country; and thus rose above the unhonoured class of adventurers, and of persons, whom poverty impels to uncertain speculations.

Zohamir, a man of talents, has never made of those talents a sterile amusement. His first principle was to enjoy the present moment.

* Upwards of 200,000l. sterling.

The majority of mankind have in this respect the most deplorable blindness. They consecrate thirty years to a laborious life, to a self-denial more painful than all their labour, and this for the sake of a pretended felicity in some future period, that in respect to them never arrives. Zohamir, far from being thus duped, has made pleasure and business go hand in hand. He had not the advantage of a fine voice, but he was a skilful singer, and this supplied the defect. Complaisant to the fair, they employed his attention without enslaving it, though, like all men of pleasure, more of his time was engaged in serving than admiring them.

This circumstance leads us to consider the character of Zohamir, attacked with the bitterest invective, and so disguised as scarcely to be recollected. His enemies have at length become absolutely impotent. What that is asserted of a character, which no man can believe, we observe no longer any thing but the blind malignity, that deals its blows at hazard. While they were contented to say, that Zohamir was confident even to presumption, and presumptuous even to rashness, nay, had they said more than this, they would have perhaps been in the right. They might with probability enough have reproached him, that he mixed in some affairs dishonourable to his talents and his judgment; but, in admitting the likelihood of this, I am desirous that it should at least be suspected, that some unknown reasons engaged him in a negotiation, where there was no honour to be reaped.

He is malevolent we are told. Indeed! That can rarely be said of a man of gaiety. But what is meant by malevolence? is it to paint

the manners of men, to draw together their follies, and to describe to us their vices and their crimes? In that case the poet, the preacher and the philosopher are the most malevolent of their kind. There are few of us, that have a right to arraign our neighbours; we scandalize and no longer converse, and we are so precipitate in our judgments, that we weep for our victims on the evening of the very day upon which we sacrificed them, we deny or we excuse whatever they consider as offensive. We partake all of us more or less in this relaxation of manners, the characteristic of a people, who are declining under the weight of an existence of twelve centuries. When a man becomes the subject of general observation, when his success has proved great and enviable, the world is willing to punish him for his superiority; we accumulate upon a single head the vices of the community, and no wonder the picture is terrific and horrible.

Events strike us but little in the beaten course of human life, because through that course they are thinly scattered. They upon us a deep and memorable impression in the page of history, because the events of a year are there compressed in a single chapter. Just so it happens, if we ascribe to a single individual the follies of a community. Perhaps I am not sufficiently understood, and I will illustrate my meaning. A thousand persons have given money to the Swiss of a nobleman's hotel. We are anxious to have an interview with his master, and this mode of obtaining it is called address and a well judged sacrifice. Do we trace this trifling action to a man, who is pursued by jealousy and hate?

hate? We denominate it profligacy and corruption. Ten thousand men of the world* have kindly lent an apartment in their house to conceal the thefts of love, and have conspired to gratify the passions of beauty in despite of the jealous precautions of a tyrannical husband. Upon this action we bestow the epithet of good nature. Do we trace it in a man, who has fallen under the remorseless fangs of the law? It assumes the name of protecting adultery, of disturbing the sacred tranquility of families. Thus in exact conformity to our different way of regarding an object, activity is intrigue, address is hypocrisy, good nature is the action of a pander, firmness is insolence, charity is ostentation; and, as it is in the nature of man to blot in a certain degree the good that he does, and to pollute his most excellent qualities with folly, malignity seizes with eagerness the petty occasions it finds, magnifies the error, and diffuses the taint over the whole course of his life.

Zohamir possesses scarcely one of the accomplishments to which he pretends. His taste is equivocal; he is mistaken in arts, in polite literature, in men. An indifferent politician, he too often mixes in the most serious discussions, an epigram, an antithesis or a pun. He has proved, that in the most common concerns of life he has no feeling for the truly beautiful. His house is Gothic and ridiculous, his edition of Voltaire injudiciously conceived, and contemptibly executed; his Figaro is at once sprightly and indecent, vulgar and philosophical, original and trite; Tarare is an unattractive

* In France perhaps; the more the pity!

mass of every moral, and every theatrical absurdity; the conversation of Zohamir is ungraceful; his connections ill chosen; his style of living tasteless and uncouth. His immense fortune would have put it in his power to exhibit a spectacle hitherto unknown. He might have united in a select and well-chosen circle, the inexhaustible amusements of wit, the irradiations of talent, and the sweets of liberty; and thus have drawn from every thing that surrounded him the sources of his own felicity. Grant, that the benefits he thus bestowed would have been ill repaid by the subjects of them; there is a pleasure of some sort in being the object of ingratitude.

The favourite chimera of Zohamir is to have a strong and distinctive character. If he talk of himself, it is only to prove his individuality; and he talks of himself with willingness. But he has not chosen the most obvious method of securing his point. If literary fame were the object in which all his affections centered, he would then endeavour in some form to be constantly before the public. The perseverance with which one indulges the lust of fame would then have been ascribed to him, and he would have had a character. If the love of accumulation were the pivot round which his passions moved, and, constant as the needle to the pole, he brought every thing into play that could fix the favours of his capricious mistress, we should then also have imputed to him a character, while he would in reality have had nothing but a passion.

Few men undoubtedly will think of Zohamir, as Zohamir thinks of himself. We must however

ever be in a high degree unjust, if we do not regard his talents as superior to those of the majority of men of his own sphere. For more reasons than one, he will be of considerable service to a municipal institution ; and the citizen, to whom we are already indebted for the liberty of America, may yet be of eminent utility to his species : Zohamir, you will observe, has kindly informed us that he was the fortunate artificer of the Transatlantic revolution. It is true, that neither Americans, nor English, nor French, suspected any thing ; but the important intelligence was communicated to the world a few days ago in an essay expressly written for that purpose. It has been pretended, that Zohamir has lost something of his gaiety. I defy the greatest wit in France to write any thing gayer, than the two pages of the Remorse France Concerning America and her Deliverer.

C N E I S.

WE have thought it amusing and perhaps useful, to place in the number of our Portraits that of the man who painted the Gallery.

Cneis has various apparent qualities, which sink into nothing, if we bring them to a strict examination. In social intercourse he is gentle, but his gentleness springs rather from the indolence of his disposition, than from an affectionate character. In composition he is sarcastical, but his sarcasms flow rather from the love of admiration, than from a malignant disposition. He is deaf to the voice of fame, because he believes he has acquired a portion of it that mankind will not contest, and because he is persuaded that men grow tired of always praising the same person, though he should every day produce a new title to their applause.

He has the exterior of irresolution, because irresolute characters are generally acceptable; and he has the reality of firmness, because the reality consists in the retaining our opinion, though we should change our mode of proceeding. He bestows his familiarity, without distinction or reserve, not so his heart; mankind are welcome to his services, not to his esteem. This mode of acting has made him more than once pass for a hypocrite, and the little care he

has

has taken to repel the charge, proves the contempt he entertains for those, who are not able to detect the secret of his soul.

Whatever be Cneis's motive, indolence, vanity or irresolution, his conduct is always right. His motive might be of a higher order, the effect is the same.

His talent consists in the abundance of his ideas, the clearness of his expression, the indulgence of his morality, the facility of his composition, the ingenuity of his conceptions, the accuracy of his portraits; but his works have never that finish we could desire. The reader always imagines he might have done better, because readers do not recollect, that minds, naturally deficient in energy, lose more than they gain by correctness and polish.

He is not destitute of invention, but his style is negligent and unornamented. His writings better suit the cultivated and the critical, than they do the multitude. More nice in his perceptions than tender in his feelings, it is his suavity alone that prevents him from being repulsive.

The passion of Cneis is to be universally agreeable. He has wherewith to attract, but not to engage us; and, if we examine, we shall find, that no-one has a right to complain of his injustice, and that no one has reason to thank him for his exertions. It is his ruling characteristic, to yield to the power of habit. He contradicts nobody, because to contradict is troublesome, and many people mistake this indifference for affectation.

The writings of Cneis will be found voluminous, and he will not have produced a single work.

work. He is a laborious author, and he will not leave one monument behind him.

By an unfortunate contrast, he thinks a subaltern place too low for him, and a situation in the first class too high. This assemblage of timidity and pride, will occasion him never to be any thing, after having thought that he was a great deal of many things. Experience has convinced him, that he is no sooner known than courted, and he has the weakness to take no pains to be known.

His timidity springs from the intimate persuasion, that he is not placed in his proper situation. He thinks every man his superior, because every man has profited of circumstances more than he has done. This recollection will spread an air of discontent over his whole existence, a tincture of malevolence over his writings, a secret diffidence over all his enterprises, a tacit self-reproach, that will not abandon him till the period, when the human frame is engaged in struggling against the calamities, that distress the poor remnant of an expiring existence.

Cneis is indefatigable in business, penetrating in judgment, fruitful in expedients, and by these qualities would have been able to make a distinguished figure among statesmen. The advantageousness of his person, the coolness of his temper, the fluency of his expression, and the apparent honesty of his manner, would have rendered him a negociator, useful to his country, dangerous to the power with whom he should have been employed. He writes better than he speaks, because, while he speaks, he is employed more in observing and judging, than in conversing.

His

His society is agreeable, amusing and sincere; his gaiety is moderate, spritely and unaffected; his indulgence is deliberate, ingenuous, and restricted within proper limitations; his manner is reserved or epigrammatical; his effort is little, because he does not hunt for sallies, and because he fears the improper application of wit; yet his absence leaves a void in the social circle, and his company is eagerly desired, even by those, who regard him with no sort of affection.

Cneis is not a man of genius, but more than a man of ingenuity; he is not a man of learning, but more than a man of information; he is not a model of human perfection, but he has the principal qualities that a man ought to have.

He has no strong propensities to social intercourse, because, for one man that knows how to converse, there are ten gossips; for one man of a sound understanding, ten more of inconsistency; for one true and sober judge, ten passionate declaimers; for one woman that reasons, ten who blunder about a meaning; for one woman that desires to be esteemed for her mind, twenty who look no farther than their persons. His misanthropy produces no worse effect upon him, than that of inaction; he believes, that such is the constitution of man, just as he perceives that aloes are bitter, poppy narcotic, elder-flower sudorific, and nenuphar composing.

How, it will be asked, have we drawn the portrait of Cneis, without mentioning that he prefers his personal gratification? Because this defect is common to all the world, and does
not

not make a part of any individual. It may be added, that a man extremely complaisant can never be in a high degree a selfish man. The first cedes in a certain degree to all the world, the latter does not yield an inch to any body.

END OF VOLUME THE SECOND.

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